

# ASSESSING CHINA'S HEGEMONIC AMBITIONS

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## ABSTRACT

### ASSESSING CHINA'S HEGEMONIC AMBITIONS

China's gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate over the past twenty years has been phenomenal and if continued even at a slightly slower pace, could exceed the GDP of the United States (US) by 2020. It is highly conceivable that China might convert the economic power into military and diplomatic power. Given China's domination of Tibet, incursions into the Spratly Islands, run-ins with the US and Japan, and a host of other seemingly assertive behavior, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate whether continued economic growth will lead to increasing hegemonic tendencies. This thesis employs a China-centric approach--China's history, classical strategic literature, strategic trends, and sources from the People's Republic of China (PRC) government, paramount leaders, and strategic thinkers are analyzed in order to uncover China's grand strategy and other clues that may signal hegemonic ambitions. These findings are then corroborated with an analysis of current day events as a reality check.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE THESIS APPROVAL PAGE .....	ii
ABSTRACT .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
ACRONYMS .....	vii
ILLUSTRATIONS .....	viii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
Proposed Research Questions .....	4
Assumptions .....	4
Definitions .....	6
Limitations .....	6
Delimitations .....	7
Significance of the study .....	7
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....	9
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS .....	14
Research Design .....	14
Defining Hegemonic Tendencies .....	17
Chinese Understanding of the Term “Hegemony” .....	25
CHAPTER 4 MANIFESTED INTENT .....	27
Historical Literature: The Seven Military Classics .....	27
Historical Overview .....	32
Contemporary Chinese Strategic Thinking .....	40
CHAPTER 5 TRANSMITTED INTENT .....	53
CHAPTER 6 REALITY CHECK .....	67
CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	78
Final Analysis .....	78
Policy Implications .....	79
REFERENCE LIST .....	86

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....	91
CERTIFICATION FOR MMAS DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT .....	92

## ACRONYMS

AMS	China's Academy of Military Science
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
CICIR	China Institute of Contemporary International Relations
CNP	Comprehensive National Power
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NDU	National Defense University
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China (Taiwan)
UN	United Nations
US	United States
WTO	World Trade Organization



## ILLUSTRATIONS

	Page
Figure 1. Comparative GDP (PPP) of China and United States .....	2

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Napoleon once said, “China is a sleeping giant. Let her lie and sleep, for when she awakens she will astonish the world” (Cumming 2004). There is little doubt that the giant has awakened. Although a relatively weak power for much of the modern era, China’s position in international politics has been dramatically increasing since 1978 when Deng Xiaoping introduced market reforms (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 1). Given China’s large territory, vast resources, and enormous population, this is scarcely surprising. With a GDP of US\$6.4 trillion dollars in 2003 (CIA 2004), it ranks second only to the United States (US). If China’s GDP continues to grow at an average rate of 6.5 percent (it has averaged 9.4 percent from 1978-2002 (*People’s Daily Online* [China], 6 October 2002)), it could overtake the US by 2020 (see figure 1). It is highly conceivable that China converts its economic power into military power through increases in defense spending. Already, this is happening. In 2004, China’s defense budget rose by 11.6 percent (*Dragonspace* [Washington], 28 May 2004). Is it then only a matter of time before China’s military capability exceeds that of the US?

In the twenty-first century, managing the rise of China could possibly be one of the most challenging problems for the US. It would be equally, if not more, challenging for states in Asia that are closer and weaker. China’s relations with many of the countries in the region as well as global powers have historically been fraught with tensions and suspicions. Some of this uneasiness continues today. This is exacerbated by the fact that China has never been clear about its motives and intentions. Often, its actions contradict

publicly stated positions. Thus, concerned states can only speculate as to what China would do with its enhanced power.

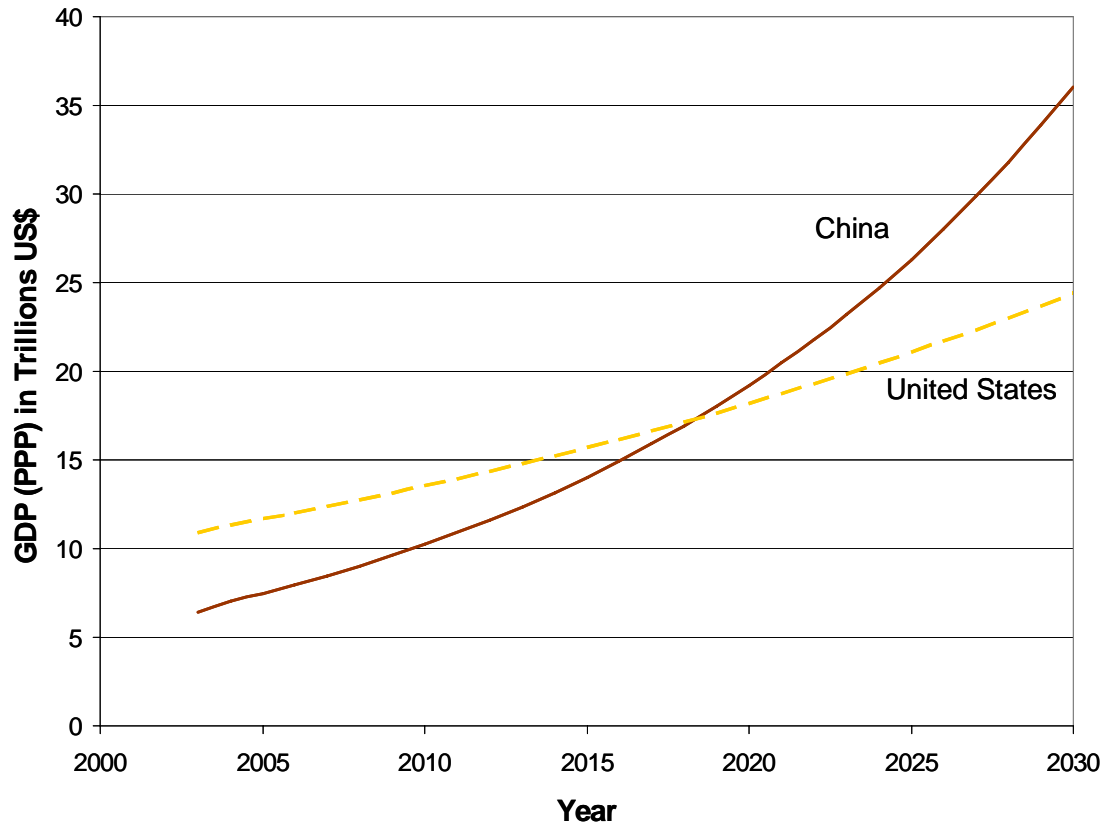


Figure 1. Comparative GDP (PPP) of China and United States

Note: Growth Rate of China projected to be 6.5 percent and US projected to be 3 percent.

Given China's economic rise, there are two perspectives regarding China's future orientation in the 2020 to 2030 timeframe when its economic power begins to eclipse that of other states. The more optimistic view suggests that the pacifying effects of economic growth would turn China into a benign power as the costs of conflict become

prohibitively high. Furthermore, economic integration brings democratic reforms and leads to an aversion to armed conflict. The experiences of Japan and Germany post-WWII support this theory. An alternative view predicts that China's rising economic and military power gives it the strength to pursue its interests more aggressively. Rising powers have typically not accepted the status quo in the international system. China would be no exception and eventually could grow to challenge US dominance in world politics, first regionally then globally. Which path would China pursue? How would China pursue this path? Would there be a higher potential for conflict in the region? If so, should China be contained instead?

Clearly, the importance of understanding China's intentions and motives cannot be understated. The path that China takes has profound implications for countries in the region, and for the global system. Some of these implications already beset us. China's military presence in the disputed territories of the Spratly Islands, in addition to Tibet, Xinjiang, and along the Korean border, as well as its development of long range ballistic missiles, demonstrate China's readiness to use force. This is cause for concern. Are these signs of an assertive China?

The purpose of this study is to assess China's hegemonic tendencies by taking a China-centric approach. The idea is to understand China's intentions and not just extrapolate them from its actions. It explores the historical precedents for a hegemonic grand strategy and examines the likelihood that such a strategy exists today and in the future. Finally, it concludes with policy implications for the US and the countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

### Proposed Research Questions

The primary research question of the thesis is: Will the economic rise of China lead to increasing hegemonic tendencies? To answer this question, several secondary questions are posed. The first one is: What are the characteristics of a state with hegemonic tendencies? This forms the basis with which China's policies and actions, both past and present, could be studied. Then the questions, has China stated hegemonic intentions explicitly or implicitly and does China's actions post-1978 suggest hegemonic tendencies are examined. These two questions provide a China-centric perspective to the analysis, while grounding it to reality. The last secondary question that is needed to argue the thesis is: Is it likely that a hegemonic strategy continues to be or emerges to be the modus operandi for China's leadership in the future (next twenty to thirty years)? Tertiary questions associated to the investigation of China's intentions are: Are there historical precedents for a hegemonic China? If so, what does a China with hegemonic tendencies look like? What is China's view of the world and its security position today?

### Assumptions

The most important assumption is that China's economic growth is as stated. Many economists have asserted that China's gross domestic product (GDP) growth figures have often been overstated. They point to energy consumption, employment rate, and other data related to GDP growth that do not corroborate the high growth rate that China reportedly experienced in the 1990s. Even the Chinese government had at times acknowledged these discrepancies. The National Bureau of Statistics has since 1998 often published official growth rates below the weighted average of that provided by the provinces (Rawski 2001). In 2000, Premier Zhu Rongji also complained in his report on

governmental work that “falsification and exaggeration are rampant.” (*China Daily* [China], 6 March 2000) Nevertheless, while China’s economic growth might not be as high as reported, many economists acknowledged that it is still very high (Brehms 2001).

The assumption that China could continue growing at such a phenomenal rate is also in question. Some argue that the high growth rates are unsustainable over time because they rely on an “extensive” strategy involving increasingly larger injections of factor inputs rather than an “intensive” strategy that exploits rapid improvements in factor productivity. The current approach of relying on exports assumes that the United States would incur a trade deficit of about \$6 trillion by the year 2020--almost 48 percent of its GDP (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 184), a situation which is highly unlikely. Other considerations such as the fragility of its banking system, its inefficient state-owned economy, and limitations of technology base also bolster the arguments of the naysayers. However, China is in the midst of economic reforms. Some of China’s brightest are being educated in the best overseas universities. Chinese companies would rise up in the value chain as the Japanese and South Korean companies have done. An outcome where China overtakes the US is not implausible.

Regardless, the chief aim of this study is to understand the strategic intentions of China and not to predict when hegemonic transitions might occur. For this reason, the assumption that China’s economy continues to grow rapidly could be made for the purpose of this study. The relevance of the study would not be in jeopardy even if China’s economy does slow down.

### Definitions

The phrase “hegemonic tendencies” requires definition. Robert Gilpin describes a hegemonic state as a single powerful state that controls or dominates lesser states in the system (Gilpin 1981, 29). While a hegemon is often imperialistic, a state arrives at its position of power in different ways. A hegemonic state does not need to use military force to establish its position of power, although military superiority is almost always a characteristic of a hegemon. For instance, many scholars agree that the United States of America is a hegemon, even though its influence is not primarily derived from military conquests. In this thesis, the author uses hegemonic tendencies to refer to the inclination of a rising power, in this case China, to gain for itself a powerful position in the international system where it could control or dominate lesser states. This includes challenging the dominant powers and re-ordering the regional and global system in its favor. The characteristics of a “rising power” with hegemonic aspirations would be dealt with in greater depth in the thesis.

### Limitations

This thesis used public information available through the Combined Arms Research Library (CARL), electronic databases, and translations provided on the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS). Sources from Chinese authors and leaders were used where possible when ascertaining motives and attitudes behind Chinese actions. However, due to the secretive nature of the Chinese government, there were limitations in obtaining the desired information. In the absence of documents recording China’s internal deliberations, further analysis was needed to reconcile rhetoric and reality. Some degree of speculation and extrapolation was therefore necessary.

### Delimitations

The intent of the study is to understand China's grand strategy and whether pursuing a hegemonic strategy is in fact a likely course of action. In looking for historical precedents, the study was confined to the 1368 (Ming dynasty) to 1978 (present-day China). Both the Ming and Qing dynasties were periods of time when China possessed substantial power compared to the states around them. Events post-1949 when China emerged as a People's Republic might also shed light on how modern China exerted herself on the world stage with regard to the export of China's brand of communism. In studying China's current day foreign policy and actions to determine whether China exhibits hegemonic characteristics, events post-1978 till present were examined. The year 1978 corresponds to the time when Deng Xiaoping took over as China's paramount leader and re-oriented China on economic modernization.

### Significance of the study

Since President Richard Nixon's historic visit to China in 1972, the United States has continued to follow a strategy of engagement. The United States and its allies sought to establish robust commercial and financial ties with China and draw the country into a variety of regional and global economic, political, and institutional arrangements. The rationale was that China would become more accepting of contemporary international order, primarily because it would be enjoying the benefits of economic wealth and therefore have a greater stake in the international status quo. If, however, China indeed has hegemonic aspirations and intends to pursue them aggressively, then the fundamental premise of engagement is flawed as it only fuels a stronger China without guarantees of a peaceful rise (Grieco 2002, 35-39). Implications for the international system are vast.



China has also never been transparent about its strategic intentions. Chinese politicians and military leaders have publicly stated many times, “It will not seek hegemony.” For example, in Lieutenant General Li Jijun’s (Vice President of the Academy of Military Science, PLA) address to the US Army War College in July 1997, he said, “The Chinese people are a people who emphasize defense rather than offense” and “China will never seek hegemony . . . and does not seek external expansion.” However, China’s actions in the Asia do not appear to match the rhetoric. In 1988, China seized seven islands from Vietnam after a brief naval clash. In 1995, China occupied Mischief Reef which was claimed by the Philippines and placed markers on other reefs and shoals in the area (Chambers 2002, 78). This study, therefore, seeks to uncover China’s grand strategy and overarching policy objectives.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is divided into three parts: The first part looks at prevailing views on China's hegemonic aspirations; the second part surveys the conceptual frameworks that were employed in the analysis; and the third part deals with sources of strategic thinking in the PRC today. This includes official papers and positions that had been put forth by the Chinese establishment, and includes literature by Chinese strategic thinkers, whose views are often tied to official positions.

The views on China's hegemonic aspirations generally fall into two categories: Those who claim that China is a rising power that would become more assertive, even challenge the existing hegemon, and those who argue that China's orientation is generally peaceful, applying force only for the purposes of defense and internal security. Swaine and Tellis belong to the first group. In their book *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy*, they describe China's grand strategy as "keyed to the attainment of three interrelated objectives: First and foremost, the preservation of domestic order and well-being in the face of different forms of social strife; second, the defense against persistent external threats to national sovereignty and territory; and third, the attainment and maintenance of geopolitical influence as a major, and perhaps primary state" (2000, x). When tempered by the strong industrial powers in the region, China pursues a "calculative strategy" that pursues economic growth and amicable relations with other states and involves itself in regional and international politics in order to seek gains. Swaine and Tellis go on to postulate that "it is unlikely that a more cooperative China will emerge if Beijing's

relative power grows to a point where a systemic power transition becomes plausible.” Instead, they argue that over the very long term, a more assertive China would emerge (2000, xi-xii). Joseph Grieco in an essay “China and America in the New World Polity” also believes that China is dissatisfied with the international and regional status quo and would challenge America’s preferred order in Asia when it becomes powerful enough. He argues that China’s economic growth has not produced Chinese democracy and therefore the effects of democratic peace do not apply (2002, 38-41).

The other camp argues that the economic rise of China would not lead to greater assertiveness and China’s use of force would solely be for the purposes of self-defense and internal unity. Terrill in his book *The New Chinese Empire* describes China as clinging to an imperial mind-set that is obsessed with internal stability and the growing power of the peripheral states, but would ultimately loosen up, producing a modern democratic state (2003, 340-342). In explaining China’s use of force, Michael R. Chamber explains that the object of its use with regard to Taiwan and the Spratly Islands has been to maintain status quo, though he concedes that “the continued rise of China is likely to give it new interests and new capabilities, and these could threaten the interests and security of the East Asian neighbors” (2002, 84). Andrew Scobell in his book *Chinese Use of Military Force* argues that “the defensive mindedness and preference for nonviolent solutions to interstate disputes are not merely empty rhetoric or symbolic discourse, but rather are part of a belief system that has been deeply internalized by Chinese civilian and military elites” (2003, 38). Michael Yahuda in an essay titled “How much has China learned about interdependence” writes that a good deal of “global socialization” had taken place as a result of China’s involvement in international and

regional fora. Mutual accommodation had helped resolve conflicts and this would likely continue, save situations concerning China's sovereignty (Yahuda 1997, 22-23). Given these two sides, one can see that there are no easy answers.

The next part of the literature review addresses frameworks and concepts used in analysis. In attempting to provide an assessment of China's hegemonic intentions, one needs to understand what is meant by hegemony, and the type of behavior that is typically associated with rising powers aspiring to be hegemonies. Robert Gilpin in his classic *War and Change in World Politics* provided some useful concepts and analysis on this subject. Robert Pastor in his analyses of how seven major powers--Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, United States, Japan, and China--crafted their policies and pursued their interests also provided useful insights into what constitutes a great power.

Alastair Johnston's work on strategic culture and grand strategy in Chinese history was referenced extensively for three purposes--first, in the examination of ancient Chinese military texts that reveal a great deal about Chinese strategic thought; second, in the analysis of Imperial Ming strategic preferences; and third, in providing a picture of what a hegemonic China might possibly look like, given its realist paradigm and historical preference to use force offensively when it had the power.

In the third part of the literature review that deals with contemporary strategic thinking, official documents and positions were examined. The white papers *on China's National Defense in 2002* and *China's National Defense in 2004* provided an official view of the security situation and the national defense policy. The "Foreword" stated that: "Chinese people, like the people of all countries, do not want to see any war, hot or cold, and turbulence in any region of the world, but yearn for lasting peace, stability and

tranquility, as well as common development and universal prosperity in the world.” Supporting the generally peaceful orientation, the goals and tasks of China’s national defense were “to continue to propel the modernization drive, to achieve national reunification, and to safeguard world peace and promote common development” (State Council Information Office 2002). To this end, the white paper spelled out a military strategy of active defense, attacking only after being attacked, pursuing peaceful reunification of Taiwan but reserving the right to use force in this matter. The white paper also explicitly stated that “China will never seek hegemony, nor will it join any military bloc or crave for any sphere of influence” (State Council Information Office 2002). This position is consistent with the pronouncements of senior statesmen. Clearly, the disconnect between other states’ perceptions of China and China’s own declarations needs to be investigated.

The works and speeches of China’s key leaders, such as Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and Jiang Zemin, were also examined. Given the clout and power of China’s paramount leaders, their strategic thought translates directly into China’s strategic orientation. Admittedly, the power of each successive leader has diminished with respect to his predecessor. Nevertheless, the consistency and trends in their rhetoric yields many useful insights on China’s strategic intentions.

Official sources and works by Chinese leaders best provide a clear articulation of strategic intent, but such materials are limited. For these reasons, the analyses of works from Chinese scholars are useful. Chinese authors from prominent Chinese academies, research institutes, and think tanks usually do not express free-wheeling opinions of their own, but positions often tied to the general guidance laid down by the government. Given

the shortage of information regarding internal deliberation, such writings can serve as a loose proxy for thinking at the political level. In examining works from Chinese scholars, Michael Pillsbury's work *China Debates the Future Security Environment* was a helpful starting point in providing an overview of Chinese security perceptions. While Chinese sources painted a detailed picture of the future strategic landscape, they had been remarkably silent about China's future security role. Nevertheless, these views were useful indicators of how China saw the world and how it fit in.

It is possible that these publicly available works are also used as tools to persuade internal and external audiences of government policy positions. However, the scope and space of academic debate has been gradually expanding, so that it is possible to infer the emergence, traction, and persistence of new ideas from these debates. This can be helpful in filtering out propaganda. In addition, works from Chinese scholars from the PRC who now undertake their research in Western academic institutions are also referenced. These authors have the advantage of the cultural sensitivity and firsthand experience of the Chinese political system, without the constraints experienced by their counterparts in China. The full analysis of contemporary Chinese strategic thought is found in chapter 4, "Manifest Intent."

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

#### Research Design

This study assesses China's hegemonic tendencies by taking a China-centric approach. An approach which only considers China's actions today and then infers what its present day intentions might be could lead to inaccurate conclusions colored by one's own biases and frame of reference. In this case where China's actions do not appear to correspond with publicly stated positions, it is even more important to look at the problem with a correct lens. This study thus uses a textual and historical methodology. It attempts to understand China's strategic intent by first examining how China saw itself in the world and then reconciling this perspective with its present day actions. The idea is to obtain the lens through which one could interpret China's explicit pronouncements or at least understand the nature of the rhetoric.

The drawback of a China-centric approach is that it relies extensively on Chinese sources, especially documents that record the policy deliberations of China's political leaders. Given the lack of transparency of the Chinese government, there are limited documents that are accessible to the public. Even so, there are still comparatively more of such documents available today than a decade ago. White papers on a variety of policy matters, including security, are now available from the Chinese State Council Information Office. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs website also provides positions and arguments on many important and sensitive issues, including key speeches and press conferences, that were in the past confined to classified government documents. Thus, combining whatever policy materials are available with an analysis of the work by

Chinese strategic thinkers (whose views reflect to some degree those of the establishment), historical precedents, and strategic culture, the author believes that this approach is feasible. In addition, the study does not discount the usefulness of reconstructing intentions from actions. This serves as a valuable check to ensure that the conclusions are grounded in reality.

First, definitions are required. The thesis must first define the characteristics of a state demonstrating “hegemonic tendencies.” This provides a standard against which to measure the actions of China, both past and present. In addition, one must examine what China understands by the term “hegemony” and determine if the discrepancies between reality and rhetoric are, in fact, caused by a dissimilar understanding of the word.

Next, three tests are used to assess China’s hegemonic tendencies. The first test is the “manifested intent” test. This step essentially investigates if China has manifested hegemonic streaks in the past or revealed such intentions in the present day (i.e. post 1978). As part of the historical approach, Chinese classics, such as Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* is studied, as these books provide a single source of strategy that arguably influenced generations of Chinese leaders. This literature also gives valuable insight into the Chinese mind-set. In addition, a historical overview spanning the finalization of the Chinese heartland to the end of Mao’s time in power is undertaken. The purpose is to search for an articulation of the grand strategy and core interests of China in the past. It is also important to consider the strategic culture of China and study the historical precedents for a hegemonic strategy. If it is indeed in China’s strategic culture to pursue a hegemonic strategy, then it is very likely that such a strategy was pursued in the past, especially in a period when China had more resources relative to its competitors. In



addition, the study takes the next step in examining what a hegemonic China looked like. This aids the understanding of China's actions today and provides useful indications as to what a hegemonic China in the future might look like. As for the present, China's intentions are discerned from the works and speeches of key leaders, policy-makers, strategic thinkers, and government departments. More about China's intentions can be deduced from an analysis and deconstruction of China's view of itself and the world than can be obtained by just looking at events in a vacuum.

A methodology that uses history to interpret present day events requires an important precondition; that is, either the same strategic culture persists today or that strategic circumstances both internal and external were so similar that it is only logical that the PRC makes decisions the same way imperial China did. This cannot be taken for granted. Thus, the "transmitted intent" test is needed. If China had pursued a hegemonic strategy in the past, one needs to examine if it is likely that such a strategy had been transmitted through the generations. China's political succession system and mechanisms for perpetuating institutional memory is studied. In general, the more recent the historical example of the pursuit of hegemonic policy, the easier it is to show that the grand strategy could indeed have been passed on.

However, it is also possible that China pursued a similar strategy in the past, not because it was bound to a specific strategic culture, but because the geopolitical factors remained unchanged. Faced with the same threats and core interests, China could be reasonably expected to react in the same way. Therefore, the "transmitted intent" test also examines the extent to which China's core threats and interests remained constant and the possibility that China employs the same strategic solutions as it did in the past. More

importantly, the transmitted intent test also helps determine if China's strategic mind-set today, regardless of whether it was inherited from the past, persists into the future.

The third test in this China-centric approach is the reality check. Present day actions are reconciled with the thesis' postulation of China's greater strategic intentions. In this test, the author first evaluates if China does indeed have the power to pursue a hegemonic strategy and then examines the events and actions that demonstrate China's assertiveness, aggression, or inclination to dominate. Having deconstructed China's policies and obtained new insights into China's grand strategy, this step also attempts to reconstruct a rationalization of China's present day foreign policy.

Finally, the study concludes with some policy implications for the United States and Asia.

### Defining Hegemonic Tendencies

Since the central task of this thesis is to determine if China exhibits hegemonic tendencies, this term deserves closer scrutiny and definition. As defined by Robert Gilpin, a hegemonic state is a single powerful state that controls or dominates lesser states in the system (Gilpin 1981, 29). Hegemonic tendencies are thus the propensity of a rising state to assert itself in a way as to control or dominate other states. While seemingly simple in definition, it is more difficult to apply the "hegemonic tendency test" in practice, because the terms "powerful," "rising," "control," "dominate," and "system" are difficult concepts in themselves. How powerful must a state be in order to be considered a rising power, capable of demonstrating hegemonic tendencies? What type of actions constitutes control and domination of other states? What does "system" actually mean and encompass? This section lists some prerequisites for a state to be considered a

rising power and provides signs that indicate domination of other states. It also defines the scope of the system the rising state must dominate in order to be considered hegemonic.

While any state with a desire to dominate the world can be considered as possessing hegemonic tendencies, this definition is not useful as it does not address the ability of the state to achieve those aims. Thus, one of the most fundamental prerequisites for a rising state is to possess substantial power. In addition, the state must also possess the means to continue accumulating that power at a rate faster than most, if not all, other states competing with it.

While power before the modern age predominately refers to military power which lends itself as the primary means to dominate other states, the experience of Pax Americana shows this is not entirely true today. Instruments of power now also include economic, diplomatic, and informational. The thinking of Chinese scholars on power fits this mold. They invented the concept of comprehensive national power (CNP) or *zonghe guoli*, which refers to the overall conditions and strengths of a country in numerous areas (Pillsbury 2000, 5-1), such as natural resources, domestic economy, science and technology, military affairs, government and foreign affairs capability, and social development as examples. While Chinese scholars attempt to compute CNP quantitatively, there are disagreements as to the exact formula for calculation. As such, this study does not borrow the quantitative metrics for determining power, but uses a more qualitative approach to define the amount of power needed to feasibly pursue a hegemonic strategy.

The author believes that economic power is the fundamental strength on which all other instruments of power are based. Even in agrarian societies, the wealth and power of states rested on the exploitation of peasant and slave agriculture as well as imperial tribute (Gilpin 1980, 111). Treasure was needed for the maintenance of followers, bodyguards, armies, mercenaries, and officials. Although the amount of taxable surplus did depend on the extent of territorial control, which in turn was a function of military power, history has often shown that the demise of an empire usually began with an inability to support its commitments in maintaining its empire (Gilpin 1980, 115). In the modern era, economic power has become even more important. The escalating cost of war due to the rapidly rising cost of materiel and technology means that states that are militarily strong must necessarily be economically strong and possess a significant science and technology base. The vast improvements in science and technology that propel productivity, the emergence of a world market economy, and capitalism as an economic system have rapidly increased the pace at which a state accumulates wealth. Economic power is hard and real.

Rising powers therefore should have a large GDP. More importantly, the GDP must be growing at a rate that could surpass or at least match that of the existing hegemon. However, GDP is only a proxy for economic strength. The underlying source of economic strength rests on its access to resources, ability to convert resources to products, and finally access to markets. Access to resources includes natural resources such as energy, minerals, and metals. Many hegemonic wars have been fought in the name of securing a stable resource base. Notable examples include the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and the German idea of *lebensraum*, which means living space. Industrial

production and services are both important means with which a state could improve its wellbeing and acquire the resources and products it needs from other states.

Achieving hegemony requires that an aspiring state possesses a high level of access to resource and markets. Preferably, the aspiring state should have its own internal markets that it can depend on. Alternatively, it should have access into global markets, although these need to be secured. In today's global system of freer trade, the freedom to buy and sell is taken for granted. The ability to buy and sell, which implies that products and services of the rising state are competitive and desirable, has become the crucial factor for acquiring wealth. Nevertheless, access does become important should the global system revert to a restricted one that favors preferential tariffs and exclusions, as would be the case in times of war.

In this age of high technology, another important component of the resource base is people. A rising state must have an abundance of human talent, in science, technology, and other professional fields. A high or rapidly rising education level is critical.

Military power still remains extremely critical in securing the conditions by which the state could accumulate wealth. It secures the environment so that trade could flow, laws would be respected and enforced, and access could be ensured. As Gilpin puts it,

Unfortunately, the growth of economic interdependence and mutual gain has not eliminated competition and distrust among nations. Trade has not always proved to be a force for peace. On the contrary, with increasing interdependence, nations have become more apprehensive about the loss of autonomy and such matters as access to foreign markets, security for sources of raw material, and the associated costs of interdependence. Economic nationalism has never been far below the surface, and in this century (20th century) the breakdown of the international economy in response to nationalism has been a contributing factor to conflict. (Gilpin 1980, 220)

Modern measures for determining military power include defense budgets, possession of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, and power projection capabilities. Power projection includes aircraft carriers, transport planes, and intercontinental ballistic missiles. The range and strength of a state's military power reflects the territories it wants to dominate and the extent to which it wants to dominate. Thus, military power, in addition to being a prerequisite for a hegemon, is also a useful indicator of a state's hegemonic tendencies.

Diplomatic power is underpinned by economic and military power. Diplomatic power is closely related to the idea of prestige. Prestige is the reputation for power. It refers primarily to the perceptions of other states with respect to a state's capacities and its ability and willingness to exercise its power (Gilpin 1981, 31). As E. H. Carr put it, prestige is "enormously important" because "if your strength is recognized, you can generally achieve your aims without having to use it" (Wight 1979, 98). With modern international institutions, diplomatic power works through new mechanisms. UN veto power, treaties, and participation in regional organizations and forums are clear indications of diplomatic power. However, the persuasive effect of diplomatic power is still largely dependent on military and economic strength. The failure to obtain a UN Security Council resolution did not stop the United States from invading Iraq in 2003. Diplomatic efforts that persuaded Libya to abandon its weapons of mass destruction in 2004 could arguably be attributed to a recognition of American power.

The informational source of power is the softest of the four instruments of power. It has the least coercive effect, but has probably the most pervasive reach. Cultural projection is one way of assessing informational power. The ready acceptance of Coke,

Big Macs, and Hollywood demonstrates the informational power of the US. The distribution network is another source of informational power. Some have attributed the demise of communism to the allures of capitalism projected through television and other media. However, the influence that informational power tries to achieve is somewhat elusive. The embrace of American movies and products does not necessarily prevent Islamic extremists from hating the United States (Ferguson 2003, 25).

Nevertheless, there has been a common thread. Hegemonies or rising powers usually possess a form of cultural superiority over other nations. The hegemon's belief that its culture or system is exceptional and worthy of being exported to other nations is clearly evident in history. The Babylonian empire sought to educate the Jewish elites in its ways. Greek philosophy and learning pervaded the empire in the fourth century B.C. Nineteenth-century Great Britain projected its culture literally with "missionary zeal." Even the Germans in World War II believed that they were a great empire, seeking to cleanse the world of less worthy races. Japan also believed that its mission was to be the leader of Asia and to lift its neighbors by instructing them in civilization. In the words of Tokutomi Soho in 1895, Japan's destiny was to "extend the blessings of political organization throughout the rest of East Asia and the South Pacific, just as the Romans had once done for Europe and the Mediterranean" (Pyle 1969, 181). In many Hollywood movies set in different countries, the American way is often portrayed as being superior to older, more traditional ways. A sense of cultural superiority is thus another possible indication of hegemonic tendency.

Having discussed the power prerequisites for a rising state, the study now focuses on "control" and "domination." A rising power with hegemonic tendencies exhibits a

propensity to “control” or “dominate” other states to shape the circumstances in favor of its interests. The clearest, most visible way of domination is the use of military force to secure a certain territory. Colonies, vassal states, tributary states, and protectorates also demonstrate the extent of the hegemon’s domination. Even without physical invasion, the threat of force to advance particular interests also constitutes domination. Besides the coercive effects of military force, the rising power or hegemon can also underwrite the security of other states. In this case, the hegemonic signs are also present as the underwriting state is obviously able to exert substantial control, whether or not it actually makes any particular demands. By this definition the United States, which underwrites the security of many of its allies including NATO countries, Korea, Japan, and its protectorates, and has a military presence in the Persian Gulf, easily passes the hegemony control test even though most of these territories are independent, sovereign states.

In the economic realm, the application of sanctions and tariffs in a coercive fashion can be considered attempts to control or dominate. However, the application of economic rewards to induce favorable behavior, such as foreign aid or preferential trade status, is more difficult to judge. While such policies do influence state actions, the state is usually free to choose the course of action to take. Thus, economic incentives do not constitute controlling or dominating behavior, unless the withdrawal of these incentives results in significant detriment to the state. In that case, the accepting state is actually under control as it has no real alternatives other than to accept the economic benefits.

The same guidelines apply for diplomatic power. Coercive diplomatic actions demonstrate attempts to control, as do diplomatic incentives that constitute the only viable course of action for the receiving state.



One point bears clarification. Hegemonic tendencies imply the proactive seeking of hegemony *before* the state has achieved hegemony. The author's usage of this term precludes the necessity to control or dominate other states once it becomes the most powerful state in the system by virtue of peaceful growth. For instance, while the US became a hegemon, it did not have hegemonic tendencies as it was isolationist for most of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It did not seek to dominate and control other states in the bid to shore up its power or pursue hegemony. Such a distinction may appear to be splitting hairs at first glance, but the reason for differentiating as such is to focus on assertive behavior that destabilizes the international system. This, the author believes, is of greater concern and interest. That the most powerful state in the international system ends up exerting hegemonic influence by virtue of its responsibilities and reach is of secondary interest.

Besides possessing the power to control and the inclination to use that power to dominate, there is also a need to consider reach. A state that has power and is willing to control its immediate surroundings is not necessarily hegemonic because its influence might be too limited. Hegemons generally dominate a large expanse of terrain. Hegemons compete with other rising powers for that domination. The scope of the hegemon's influence depends largely on the known world at the time of the hegemon's existence. For the Babylonian empire around 600 B.C., its hegemonic reach encompassed mostly the Middle East, from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf. For the Roman empire in 500 A.D., this included much of what is today Western Europe. For the British, its control extended to the Americas and Asia. Today, a hegemonic system encompasses the entire world. Although it is possible to consider a regional hegemony, this term is less

relevant in this context in the face of the ever-present global hegemon, the United States, whose influence is felt throughout the known world and especially in the Asia Pacific region. Therefore, a rising power aspiring to be a hegemon must desire to replace the existing one, and similarly exert its influence throughout the world.

In summary, a hegemonic state must meet three criteria. First, it must have the greatest amount of power of all competing states, and be capable of influencing other states in its interests. Second, its intentions and actions must demonstrate control or domination of lesser states. Third, the scope of this influence must encompass the global system as the state knows it. For a rising power with hegemonic tendencies, the same framework can be applied but with some concessions. The rising state need not necessarily hold the greatest amount of power nor be able to extend its influence through the entire global system, as long as it has an increasing potential to acquire more power, with the distinct possibility of overtaking the existing hegemon. Nevertheless, a rising power needs to demonstrate a propensity to assert itself so as to control or dominate other states in order to be construed as possessing hegemonic tendencies.

#### Chinese Understanding of the Term “Hegemony”

Thus far, the definition provided for hegemony comes from a Western source. The use of the word hegemony is neutral, that is there are no positive or negative connotations associated to it. The word merely describes the power and position of a state relative to others. Some hegemons have been known to be harsh, oppressive, or mercantilistic. Others have been benign, supporting a global system emphasizing an open, interdependent world economy based on free trade, non-discrimination, and equal treatment. Most of the time, a unipolar system brings about a hegemonic peace.

However, Chinese understanding of the term “hegemony” has a darker, more aggressive tone. The Chinese word for hegemony is “ba quan” which translates literally as “oppressive power.” This is borne out in Chinese usage of the term hegemony. Very often, its use is tied to “aggression,” “expansion,” (Office of State Council 2002) and “threat” (Embassy of the Republic of China in India 2004). Mao Zedong had at various times accused the Soviet Union and the US of being a hegemon, using the term to reproach. China has consistently stated that it will never seek hegemony, even when it becomes powerful in the future (*China Daily* [China], 14 March 2004).

While this difference in understanding of the term might shed some light on the Chinese aversion for the term, it does not fully explain the inconsistency between rhetoric and action, given China’s past record in Xinjiang, Tibet, and the Spratly Islands. As further clarification to China’s denouncement of hegemony, China had also pledged not to seek expansionism and has expressed that it had no desire for foreign territory, words clearly contradictory to its presence in the Spratlys. It is thus necessary to explore Chinese history, literature, and strategic thinking more deeply in order to understand the Chinese mind-set.

## CHAPTER 4

### MANIFESTED INTENT

This chapter examines the manifested intent of China. It explores historical literature and imperial history for evidence of hegemonic mind-sets. It also analyzes contemporary strategic thinking.

#### Historical Literature: The Seven Military Classics

One way of understanding strategic thinking of a particular civilization is to pore through the historical literature and trace the origin of strategic culture to a body of work. It is a bold assumption that the strategic thought of a particular state leads to a point of genesis. Fortunately for China, such a point does arguably exist--the *Seven Military Classics*. These comprise the widely read *Sun Zi Bing Fa* (more commonly known as known as Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*), the *Wu Zi Bing Fa*, the *Si Ma Fa*, the *Wei Liao Zi*, the *Tai Gong Liu Tao*, the *Huang Shi Gong San Lue*, and the *Tang Tai Zong Li Wen Gong Wen Dui*, collectively dating from the fifth century B.C. to about the tenth century A.D. (Johnston 1995, 40). These are the same texts Alistair Johnston analyzed in his ground breaking work on strategic culture in the book *Cultural Realism*.

The general body of work on Chinese strategic culture had focused heavily on Sun Tzu and concluded that the general strategic preference of the Chinese was for the controlled and restrained use of force, favoring defense over offense. Johnston observed the following about the secondary literature on Chinese strategic culture:

These characteristics include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) a theoretical and practical preference for strategic defense – earthworks, walls, garrisons, static positional defense, accompanied by diplomatic intrigue and alliance building rather than the invasion, subjugation, or extermination of the adversary; (2) a preference for limited war, or the restrained application of force

for clearly enunciated political ends; and (3) an apparently low estimation of the efficacy of violence, as embodied for instance in Sun Zi's oft cited phrase "not fighting and subduing the enemy is the supreme level of skill." (1995, 25)

There are a number of sources where this notion could have possibly emerged. Besides the famous Sun Tzu quote of "not fighting and subduing the enemy is the supreme level of skill," most of chapter three in Sun Tzu's *Art of War* suggests attack by stratagem and not by force.

Hence to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting.

Thus the highest form of generalship is to balk the enemy's plans; the next best is to prevent the junction of the enemy's forces; the next in order is to attack the enemy's army in the field; and the worst policy of all is to besiege walled cities.

The rule is, not to besiege walled cities if it can possibly be avoided.

The general, unable to control his irritation, will launch his men to the assault like swarming ants, with the result that one-third of his men are slain, while the town still remains untaken. Such are the disastrous effects of a siege.

Therefore the skillful leader subdues the enemy's troops without any fighting; he captures their cities without laying siege to them; he overthrows their kingdom without lengthy operations in the field. (Giles 1910)

The *Seven Military Classics*, in general, "repeat in various forms the statement that weapons are inauspicious instruments, and were only to be used under unavoidable circumstances." A quote from the *San Lue* states "As for the military, it is not an auspicious instrument; it is the way of heaven to despise it," while the *Wei Liao Zi* says, "As for military, it is an inauspicious instrument; as for conflict and contention, it runs counter to virtue" (Johnston 1995, 66-67).

In addition, others suggest that this negative view of violence could come from Lao Zi and his doctrine of using "softness to overcome hardness" (*yi rou ke gang*) (Armed Forces University 1984, 12-13). Another likely possibility is that the eschewing of violence came from a Confucian-Mencian ethic that premised the security and

prosperity of the state on the ruler's virtue and good governance. It is only when the use of force becomes unavoidable, usually because of the incorrigible nature of the enemy, that Chinese strategic preferences lean toward the defensive and limited use of force. Offensive campaigns, when launched, were to punish the enemy, to deter, or to pacify, rather than annihilate (Johnston 1995, 64). Thus, the findings about China's strategic culture from the secondary literature and a cursory reading of the *Seven Military Classics* would have to acknowledge that the Chinese ideal is unhegemonic, resorting to violence only when there were no other choices.

However, it is puzzling that these classics hold such prominence in Chinese literature if, in fact, war should be avoided. Sun Tzu wrote in his opening paragraph, "The art of war is of vital importance to the State. It is a matter of life and death, a road either to safety or to ruin. Hence it is a subject of inquiry which can on no account be neglected" (Giles 1910). The *Si Ma Fa* notes, "Although the realm is at peace, if [the state] forgets how to war, then it necessarily faces danger" (Liu 1955, 5). There is an implicit acknowledgement in the texts of the concept of a righteous war. War is important because the enemy could be unrighteous, vicious, or cruel. Johnston in his analysis of the classics writes:

In short, in the face of unrighteous behavior one must negate the enemy with force. Under the banner of righteousness, the destruction of the enemy was both necessary and desirable. Righteous wars would restore the correct order of things, people and policies. (1995, 70)

Thus, the restraint that the texts appear to place on violence is cast aside. If the enemy is judged to be unrighteous, any strategy that is deemed most expedient and effective in eliminating the problem can justifiably be employed. Sun Tzu's menu of

options, in this case, includes deception, use of spies, and attacking using fire, that is, burning the enemy (Giles 1910, chaps 1, 12, 13).

Johnston's final conclusion is that the paradigm laid out by the *Seven Military Classics* is similar to the *parabellum* paradigm within the Western traditions of realpolitik behavior. This paradigm bears the following assumptions about the role of war in human affairs, the nature of the adversary, and the efficacy of military force and applied violence: "That war is inevitable or extremely frequent; that war is rooted in an enemy predisposed to challenge one's own interests; and that this threat can best be handled through the application of superior force" (Johnston 1995, 106). All seven texts indicate that knowledge of warfare and appropriate preparations were closely tied to the achievement of state security. Conversely, none of the texts argues that political and military stratagems result in state security directly. Furthermore, all the texts recognize violence as the direct means to subdue the enemy.

As for the necessity of virtue and good governance, only two texts (*Wei Liao Zi* and *San Lue*) suggest a direct relationship between "internal rectification" and the defeat of the adversary. Even so, in the *Wei Liao Zi* the implied link is through the state's ability to mobilize resources for war, and in the *San Lue*, the implied link is to the morale and willingness of the people to fight, both intimately tied to the use of violence. Only in two texts were there relationships that suggest that nonviolent means could lead directly to the capitulation of the enemy. But the context suggests that this was either an idealized conception of warfare or an ambiguous reference to military deception (Johnston 1995, 106-107).

Nevertheless, the tension between this *parabellum* paradigm and the benign Confucian-Mencian concept is clearly evident. One explanation for this has to do with “the use of symbols to obscure the gap between the professed values of a group and actual behavior” (Johnston 1995, 252). Related to this idea, Johnston suggests that the *Seven Military Classics* implicitly acknowledges that the practical realities did not conform to the idealized notion of governance and statecraft. Thus, the texts use the Confucian-Mencian concept of “righteous war” as well as indirect connections between *wen* (civil behavior) and military victory, to retain their links to the Confucian-Mencian ideals (Johnston 1995, 253). Andrew Scobell, in his book *China’s Use of Military Force*, posits a different theory. He believes that China has a dualistic strategic culture: A Confucian one, which is averse to conflict and defensive-minded and a *realpolitik* one that favors military solutions and offensive action (Scobell 2003, 15). Both strands of strategic culture, he says, feature strongly in China’s decisions to use force.

On balance, the author agrees that the *Seven Military Classics* do appear to allude to the inevitability of pursuing a righteous war as a result of an unrighteous enemy, and thus argue for the use of force to achieve state security. Nonmilitary and civil behaviors appear to support security only through positive effects on the morale of the army and the greatness of the state which in turn contributes to the means of waging war. The only caveat is that the pursuit of aggressive measures needs to be tempered by a clear understanding of the relative powers of the two states in conflict. As Sun Tzu wrote, “According as circumstances are favorable, one should modify one's plans. . . . If he is secure at all points, be prepared for him. If he is in superior strength, evade him” (Giles 1910, chap 1). This suggests that China’s avoidance of force or preference for defense



could be more adequately explained by realpolitik and power considerations rather than the restraining effect of the Confucian-Mencian philosophy. Nevertheless, at least rhetorically, China's leaders and policy makers have appeared to be bound by the need to justify their actions according to Confucian-Mencian ideals.

If the assumptions stated in the *parabellum* paradigm were held, then it follows that preemptive attacks are a preferred course of action, since it is inevitable that the enemy attacks eventually. Extrapolated, this suggests a preference for the use of force to secure the state's well being and a propensity for expansionism, except in situations when the state does not have enough power.

Is this conclusion merely the result of clever deconstruction without any grounding in a historical basis? Alistair Johnston's argues that the strategic thinking laid out by the texts can be found in the strategic decision making process of the Ming Dynasty, and the "generally accepted view that these characteristics (of strategic culture) changed little from Sun Tzu to Mao Zedong" (Johnston 1995, 25). The extent to which these strategic preferences were followed throughout Chinese history and how the classics were interpreted for modern times shows the relevance of this particular paradigm of strategic thought. The next few sections show that for the most part, Chinese strategy throughout history and modern strategic thought followed a strategic culture that closely resembles Western traditions of realpolitik behavior, tempered by a realistic understanding of the state's capability vis-à-vis the enemy's.

### Historical Overview

The purpose of this section is to look into the historical context, to discover patterns in the security behavior of China. The overview traces the development of the

Chinese heartland, and then elaborates on three specific time periods, namely the Ming Dynasty, the Qing Dynasty, and modern China from 1949-1978. Arguably, the Chinese heartland was established only in the early decades of the Ming Dynasty (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 23), thus the Ming Dynasty is the earliest period where one could discern which areas could be considered Chinese territories and which areas were peripheral. The three time periods are also correspond to eras in which China had both strength and weakness, and where substantial information is available. The outcome of the analysis shows that China has thus far adopted a strategic preference for the use of force against external entities for defense and periphery control when it was powerful, and a reliance on non-coercive security strategies when the state was weak. Although less conclusive, there is evidence to suggest that geopolitical centrality and pre-eminence is important to China.

The Chinese heartland emerged over a period of 1000 years. A single, unified Chinese state emerged in 221 B.C., after centuries of protracted warfare and politicking. The Qin state managed to conquer rival feudal kingdoms and established the Qin Dynasty. This first Chinese state covered much of present day North China south of the Great Wall. In the following centuries until 24 A.D., major institutions and features of what was known as the imperial Chinese state were formed. Centralized political and military control over the emerging heartland region was the result of these institutions. Subsequently, the Chinese state expanded to occupy the entire heartland region through “the gradual migration of northern Chinese people southward, eastward, and southwestward to the ocean, the high plateaus of Central Asia, and the jungles of Southeast Asia” (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 24). By 220 A.D. (later Han Dynasty), much of

North and Central China had been settled. However, the heartland was not fully established until after the migratory stages in the Tang, Song, and Ming Dynasties, where the remaining parts of southwest China, South China proper, and finally Yunnan province, were occupied (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 23-24).

Through history, the security preoccupation of the Chinese state was to protect the heartland and it appeared only to expand as far as necessary to secure the heartland. Various types of static defenses along China's territorial frontiers and coastlines, such as military garrisons and fortifications, were employed. The Great Wall of China was a case in point. The other method of securing the heartland was to control or influence the peripheral regions. This Chinese concept of the periphery grew and shrank through the ages, but at certain points in time included modern Xinjiang, outer and inner Mongolia, Tibet, northeast China (formerly Manchuria), the Korean Peninsula, and ocean regions adjacent to China's eastern and southern coastline, Hainan Island, Taiwan, Japan, and the Russian Far East (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 24-25). As Swaine and Tellis observed, the total size of the heartland and periphery has remained roughly constant throughout history. Even after incorporating much of the strategic periphery into the Chinese state in the early modern era, China did not seek to control or dominate states to establish a new periphery.

While this may appear to be historical evidence to show that China was inherently defensive in nature, one could not ignore the frequent use of force in Imperial China. According to a source from the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences, there were a total of 3,790 recorded wars from 1100 B.C. to the end of the Qing dynasty. In the Ming dynasty alone, there were 1.12 wars per year through the entire 270 years of history

(Johnston 1995, 27). The Chinese were more than willing to use force to secure their territories.

A closer look at the use of force and non-coercive methods in the Ming and Qing dynasties suggests that power considerations, and not defense per se, better explains China's military adventures into the periphery and beyond. The historical record shows that once imperial rule had been consolidated internally, the early rulers used military force to re-conquer parts of the heartland that had been lost during the decline of the previous regime, or to exert influence of the new regime on the periphery. This also corresponds to a time when power in the dynasty was rising. Force was also used secondarily during the middle stages before decline, largely in retaliation to offensive actions of the states or peoples in the periphery. In the last stages of a dynasty when power was waning, there was a marked preference for non-coercive measures instead of military force. Military force might also be used at this stage, but this was usually the result of desperation or as a consequence of political pressure (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 55). The process of periphery contraction usually occurred when the dynasty was weak internally, and when nomadic raiders or states in the periphery grew strong. In other words, power, or the lack thereof, was the main reason why China expanded into its periphery or adopted more defensive measures. It is thus possible that the main reason why imperial and modern China did not expand beyond the periphery was because it did not have the capability to do so.

In Johnston's analysis of Ming grand strategic preferences, he argued that the advocates of the offensive or more actively coercive strategy were clear about the effectiveness of the strategy. Even advocates of the active defense argued not from the

point of view that this was a superior strategy in eliminating the threat, but from the position that the Ming dynasty did not have sufficient capability to pursue the Mongol forces in areas very distant from their bases in China. Ming strategists who favored a defensive strategy usually started from a premise that the Ming was not capable of anything else, and that this was a strategy for the short to medium term, essentially to buy time. While accommodative policies were also present in the Ming dynasty, they were not preferred. The Ming strategists did not see accommodation as an effective long term solution, and considered it a threat to deterrence and credibility. Furthermore, these policies allowed the Mongols to acquire materials and technology that improved their military capabilities. The only sustained period where active accommodation took place was the 1570s. Proposals for accommodation were also accompanied with demands for increased offensive and defensive capabilities (Johnston 1995, 216-230).

The hypothesis that the preference for the use of force or coercive methods corresponds to periods of greater military capability and resources would theoretically lead to higher incidences of war and military conflict during periods where the Ming dynasty was more powerful. Evidence appears to support this, given Yong Le's large scale offensive expeditions against the Mongols in 1410, 1414, 1422, 1423, and 1424 (Johnston 1996, 231). The Ming initiated an average of 0.27 major conflicts per year with the Mongols during Yong Le's reign, when the average over the length of the dynasty was 0.24, a difference that is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (Johnston 1996, 233). From 1425 to 1449, the average was 0.28 conflicts per year. After the Ming defeat at Tu Mu, the Ming only initiated one conflict from 1450 to 1457 (average of 0.14). By 1570, the Mongols had grown to become a formidable challenge, while the Ming faced

military, fiscal, and social crises. By 1600, the Ming was hardly initiating any military conflicts. In terms of percentages, which is a more useful indicator of Ming coerciveness, the Ming initiated the majority of the conflicts from the founding of the dynasty until about 1440, when the power of the Mongols began to overtake the Ming, and they (Mongols) in turn initiated most of the conflicts from 1440 until the end of the dynasty, except for a decade in the 1580s (Johnston 1995, 231-238). Given a choice, the Ming Dynasty saw force as a more effective means of eliminating threats.

The Qing Dynasty exhibited similar characteristics. Although lacking the statistical rigor of Johnston, evidence shows that the majority of the Qing campaigns occurred in the first 150 years. These were against Burma (1658-61), Taiwan (1662), Russia (1662-89), Tibet (1720, and 1750-51), Mongols (1755-7), Xinjiang (1758-9), Burma (1763-9), Vietnam (1788-9), and Nepal (1792) (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 48). The Qing managed to “secure and largely retain Korea, Tibet, and both inner and outer Mongolia as vassal states, successfully invaded Burma and Nepal (the latter largely in defense of Tibet), advanced China’s border well north of the Amur River, and incorporated Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang), and Taiwan into the empire as provinces.” (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 60) The Qing was also successful in eliminating the threat posed by the Mongols and the nomadic people. Although the Qing Dynasty had also used force against foreign imperial powers in the later stage, such as the Tianjin Massacre with France in 1870, the Ili crisis with Russia in 1879, the Sino-French War from 1884 to 1885, the Sino-Japanese War from 1894 to 1895, and the Boxer Rebellion (1900), these were often motivated by political pressure or acts of desperation. Instead, accommodation and appeasement became the dominant strategy from 1880 onward. These measures

reflected a clear recognition for a weak China to remain engaged with the external powers, and to maximize strategic leverage and flexibility (Fairbank 1992, 61).

With the founding of the new Republic of China in 1911, Yuan Shikai sought to consolidate the peripheral territories that had been under Qing influence. These included Mongolia, Xinjiang, Manchuria, and Tibet. Military forces were sent to claim Tibet, Xinjiang, and Mongolia between 1911 and 1935, mostly to secure a buffer against Great Britain and Russia. But due to weak military capability, these efforts were not successful (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 63). The communist regime within the first decade of its establishment in 1949 also sought to reaffirm control over these regions by incorporating them into the People's Republic of China either as a province (Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and former Manchuria) or as an autonomous region (Tibet). Taiwan was prevented from being absorbed by the United States. The campaigns of Korea (1950-1953), Tibet (1950-1951), and India (1962) (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 48) showed that the propensity to use force had not waned. Conversely, the relative weakness of the Chinese state as compared to the US and Russia limited the number of military encounters. In this scenario, China has at times courted and switched alliances with the two superpowers in a manner that best suited its interests.

What does the historical analysis say about China's hegemonic tendencies? China clearly adheres to *realpolitik*, but this does not automatically imply hegemonic tendencies unless accompanied by the requisite power and the judgment that domination is the best way to secure the state's interests and security. The closest that China ever approached to being hegemonic was probably in the Ming Dynasty, when it operated a blue water navy. The Emperor Yongle formed a blue water naval force to unify the Ming Empire and to

exert influence to areas west of the South China Sea. Zhenghe's naval expeditions during this time reached Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, and even East Africa. Military force reached only the coastal states east of Sumatra but on one occasion was applied in Ceylon (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 52-53). This was a substantial expanse that rivaled that of any known power of the day, and dominated China's known world (Europe and the Americas were still not part of China's calculus). Although China's naval power only existed for a short time, it reflected China's desire for trade and influence. During the Qing dynasty and early modern China, China's power was only sufficient to control the periphery and not beyond, while the "world" rapidly expanded. Thus, while its power did not give it hegemony status, China's assertiveness to secure its periphery kept up with the military capability and resources it owned.

Beyond security considerations, Swaine and Tellis argue that control of the periphery is also desirable for prestige. The reasons for Chinese control of the periphery are summarized as follows.

(a) To eliminate existing and potential threats to Chinese frontiers and trade routes posed by nearby tribes, kingdoms, or foreign states; (b) to intimidate or persuade neighboring states, kingdoms, and peoples along the periphery into accepting Chinese suzerainty and thereby acknowledging China's sinocentric world view; and generally (c) to reinforce, among the Chinese populace, the personal authority of the new regime and its leaders. These purposes all derived, in turn, from the fundamental desire of the Chinese state (both imperial and modern) to affirm its legitimacy, authority, and status with regard to both domestic and foreign audiences and to defend the heartland from attack. (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 36)

China had often established a tributary-suzerain relationship with many peripheral states such as Korea and Vietnam, exchanging the vassal's acknowledgement of China's pre-eminence with an obligation to protect the vassal when attacked (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 55). Not all of the periphery can be justifiably argued as fundamental to China's security.



After all, China's main nomadic threats came from the Mongols and Manchus in the north, while the more sedentary kingdoms near its eastern, western, and southern borders, such as Korea, Tibet, Xinjiang, and Vietnam, posed little threat and were in fact often dominated by a strong Chinese state. Although China's desire for a buffer zone against Japan and Russia in the nineteenth century might justify its need for expansion, these regions were not recent additions to the Chinese concept of the periphery. These regions have always been considered part of the Chinese sphere of influence, possibly for tribute or prestige.

Thus, one could conclude that China had historically adopted a realist approach to international relations, preferring to use force against its enemies when it had the capability. It also appears that historically China had a desire to achieve a position of pre-eminence. If China today adopts the same strategic preferences as it did in the past, should China's power grow disproportionately with the rest of the great powers, and should its desire for geopolitical centrality remain unabated, there is little to suggest that China would not expand its influence and control as globalization enlarges the space in which China operates. Hegemonic strategy would thus emerge as a possible strategy to secure its interests and borders. This, however, is a very big "if."

#### Contemporary Chinese Strategic Thinking

Moving to the present, the study turns to contemporary Chinese sources of grand strategy. This section draws from official statements, speeches, and documents from the Chinese government, as well as writings from prominent Chinese leaders, such as Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin. In addition, it also examines the works of contemporary

security analysts and strategic thinkers from China and works from Chinese scholars from the PRC who now undertake their research in Western academic institutions.

On the whole, little is written and said officially about China's future security role or strategic intentions, beyond the statement that "China will never go for expansion nor will it seek hegemony" (State Council Information Office 2004). Much of the analyses and conclusions thus have to be inferred from their writings and debates. To do this, the study examines materials to sift out the contemporary Chinese paradigm of international relations, China's vision of the future world order, and underlying assumptions and principles in their arguments that could hint at hegemonic tendencies.

As with the imperial era, China's paradigm today for international affairs is still predominantly a realist one. This realist paradigm is characterized by the assumptions that the nation state is the primary actor in international relations, anarchy predominates in international politics for lack of an equivalent of central government, and that the possession and use of power is fundamental to ensuring the security of states. China's security concerns are thought to stem either from other states or from internal threats that threaten the unity of the Chinese state. For China, the US, Japan, India and, to a certain extent, Russia remain critical security challenges. China's National Defense White Paper in 2004 explicitly stated that "the separatist activities of the 'Taiwan independence' forces have increasingly become the biggest immediate threat to China's sovereignty and territorial integrity." In addition, the same paper highlighted China's primary assumptions of anarchy and the role of power in international relations. In the assessment of the security situation, the paper stated that "factors of uncertainty, instability and insecurity are on the increase," "the military factor plays a greater role in international configuration

and national security,” and “tendencies of hegemonism and unilateralism have gained new ground, as struggles for strategic points, strategic resources and strategic dominance crop up from time to time” (State Council Information Office 2004).

The Chinese obsession with the use of Comprehensive National Power (CNP) in predicting the future security environment (Pillsbury 2000, Prologue 2) and determining China’s position vis-à-vis other powerful nation states is also a common feature in its strategic thinking. Following such an assessment, the preferred strategy (though there is no consensus) as laid out by several scholars such as Dr. Yan Xuetong of China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), China’s largest international studies institute, is to “bide our time and build up our capabilities” (tao guang yang hui). This strategy has also been articulated by Deng Xiaoping, as summarized by his quote “yield on small issues with the long term in mind” (Pillsbury, Prologue 3). Other recommendations premised on realist assumptions, ranging from confrontational to cautionary, are also prevalent in Chinese strategic thinking.

China must seek allies among all countries that could become America’s potential opponents or future. (He 1996, 41)

The Western forces are attempting to drag China into the mire of the arms race. . . . In an arms race with the United States, China will consume its national power, collapse without a battle. (Sing Tao Jih Pao [Hong Kong], 28 May 1999)

There are, however, distinctive characteristics in China’s brand of realism. First, China’s key principle in its dealings in international affairs is upholding national interests, instead of ideology or ethnocentrism. Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civilization” prognosis is thus rejected (Deng 1999, 49-50). This has arguably been shaped by Deng Xiaoping, who said “National sovereignty and national security should be the top priority” and “national rights are more important than human rights” (Deng

1993, 331; 347-348). Second, there is an emerging consensus that national interests can be separated from domestic politics. The explanation of China's foreign policy based on domestic political pressures, a popular theory among Western experts, is roundly rejected by Chinese scholars. Third, China's brand of realism takes into account softer aspects, such as "The Five Principles of Coexistence" and the role of international institutions and fora. The "Five Principles of Co-existence" has been publicly touted by Chinese leaders as the blueprint for world peace and development, and recently by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao at a commemoration ceremony for the 50th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence (People's Daily Online [China], June 28 2004). These five principles of mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty; mutual non-aggression; mutual noninterference in internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and mutual coexistence are in fact China's strategy for coping with realist power dynamics. Ultimately, they boil down to "a notion of political authority as lying exclusively in the hands of spatially differentiated states" (Wendt 1994, 388) and "reinforce the structural source of power politics" (Deng 1999, 50). China also uses the United Nations (UN) and other regional fora to advance its interests.

However, views rooted in liberalism have been emerging, although still overshadowed by the realist paradigm. Chinese international relations writings make increasing references to the interdependence in international relations from the late 1980s onwards. For example, a *People's Daily* editorial on the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit wrote, "Exchanges in economies, trade, investment, science and technology, and information have increased steadily in recent years, spawning the

growing interdependence of world economies.” (People’s Daily [China], 16 Nov 1994)

Even the Chinese President Jiang Zemin said,

Many issues, such as economic relations, trade exchanges, scientific and technological development, environmental protection, population control . . . are of a global and international nature and all of them require cooperation and commonly observed standards. (Beijing Xinhua [China], 15 Nov 1994)

We have all along maintained that countries should abide by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and the universally recognized basic norms governing international relations, the affairs of a country should be decided by the government and people of the country and that matters in the world should be handled by governments and peoples of all countries through consultations on the basis of equality. We oppose hegemonism and power politics of all forms. The international community needs to set up a new security concept with mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and collaboration at its core and work to create a peaceful international environment of long-term stability and security. (Jiang 2001)

More recently, Zeng Qinghong, Vice President of PRC, spoke as if from a liberal paradigm, when he said of the decision at the 4th Plenum on the Party’s Ability to

Govern in 2004:

The Decision stresses the need to hold high the banner of peace, development, and cooperation, to implement unswervingly our independent, sovereign, and peaceful foreign policy, to continue to follow the road of peace and development, never to seek hegemony, to continue to start out from the fundamental interests of the Chinese people and the common interests of the people of all countries, to extend justice, to support impartiality, to oppose hegemonism and power politics, and to oppose terrorism.

The Decision stresses . . . the need for the spirit of mutual respect and seeking common ground while preserving differences in handling international matters. Accelerate familiarization with and skill in applying international rules and conventions, participate actively in consultations on relevant international affairs and the formulation of international rules. Respond appropriately to the international community’s concerns regarding the situation in China, and do more to create an environment of international public opinion which is favorable to China’s development. (Zeng 2004)

Is it possible that the liberal paradigm grows to supplant the realist one? If so, a change of ideas could lead to a change in behavior--a good indication that China would not pursue hegemonic policies assertively. In this case, even if China’s rise remains

unabated, it would likely result in a peaceful hegemonic transition, instead of one wrought by competition and conflict. Yong Deng, assistant professor of political science and assistant director of the Center for International Studies at Benedictine University, writes “As time passes, the younger generation of leaders and scholars with a more liberal worldview will likely have growing influence in defining Chinese national interests.” He also argues that further economic liberalization and solidification of democratic institutions enables liberal values to contest more forcefully the Chinese definition of national interests (1999, 63). Until this shift occurs, China’s security paradigm is distinctly realist.

Another way to gauge China’s hegemonic tendencies, or lack thereof, is to examine China’s vision of the future world order. In this aspect, there is general consensus among the leading Chinese scholars that the future world order and their preferred one as well, is a multipolar world. Huan Xiang, Deng Xiaoping’s national security advisor, first articulated this forecast in 1986 (Pillsbury 2000, 1-4):

Even though the two superpowers still are the two countries with the most solid actual strength . . . the new stage of US-Soviet relations will further weaken their ability to control and influence their respective allies. More and more of their allies will seek an even greater level of independence . . . within the two blocs, here are also increasingly developing trends of economic and political friction and being at odds with the leadership. . . . The world’s political multipolarity trend will further develop. (Huan 1986, 1292-1293)

Their belief in the trend toward multipolarity had also been communicated publicly to American audiences, for instance when the vice president of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) Academy of Military Science addressed the United States Army War College in 1997 (Li 1997, 8). The Chinese Defense White Paper in 2004 further reaffirms that “the trends toward world multipolarization and economic

globalization are deepening amid twists and turns” (State Council Information Office 2004).

Although Yang Dazhou, a well-known senior analyst at the Institute of American Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS), published a direct and detailed criticism of the multipolar assessment, arguing that the United States would retain its superpower status and its allies for at least three decades, this was met by an unusually “sharp” rebuttal by General Huang Zhengji, a senior general in military intelligence. Thereafter, the multipolar world order prognosis continued to dominate all Chinese international studies journals, as if the revisionist view was never published (Pillsbury 2000, 1-7). The debate in China appears to be limited to “who would form the poles of the coming multipolar world, how a pole should be defined and on what basis classifications should be made; the transition to a multipolar world and how to characterize the turmoil and world structure of such a transition period; and finally, how Chinese analysts interpret and construe recent events as evidence for the prevailing orthodox view, or conversely for the reformist view” (Pillsbury 2000, 1-26).

China appears to believe that the multipolar world order best achieves peace and security for it. Xiong Guangkai, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the PLA, at a speech at Harvard University in December 1997, said:

Any efforts of seeking hegemony and world domination can only result in accumulating contradictions and fermenting war.

Only by facing up to and promoting such a trend as the co-existence of multipolarity can we bring about peace and prosperity. (Xiong 1998, 1-6)

These statements are consistent with China’s advocacy for “The Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence” to be adopted as the norm for international relations. China analysts have also said that China could assist the trend toward multipolarity. Feng

Zhongping of CICIR calls the relationship between China and Europe “a strategic partnership” that can help EU become an independent pole (Feng 1988, 1-6).

The prevalence of the multipolar world order view and the preference for this international structure suggests that China foresees itself not as a hegemon, but a pole, albeit a prominent one. China’s officials and strategic thinkers believe that multipolarity is most conducive for peace and development for all, although there would be transitional pains in the process. China also sees the US as causing most of the problems and potentially drawing China into a conflict. The State Council of the PRC said of the United States in 1996:

As long as China remains a socialist country with the Communist Party in power and as long as China does not adopt the American style political system, no matter how much Chinese economy develops, how much democracy is introduced in politics, and how much human rights is improved [the United States] will just look but not see and listen but not hear. As what people often said, “prejudice is worse than ignorance.” . . . [The United States is just] using human rights [issue] to interfere in Chinese domestic politics and promote hegemonism and power-politics. (Press Office of the State Council 1996)

In Deng Xiaoping’s formulation of the sources of future warfare, a crucial factor is that China will not be a source of war, nor does China aspire to be a superpower, even though Chinese officials since 1988 have explicitly accepted the Ikle-Wohlstetter Commission estimate that China will have the world’s biggest economy around 2020 (Pillsbury 2000, 1-26). However, Chinese officials and strategic thinkers do not compromise on the use of force, even against the US and its allies, should the Taiwan situation deviate from status quo. This appears to be the only scenario where China would explicitly abandon peace and initiate armed conflict.

Is this preference for a multipolar world order merely a rhetoric, expressing a desire to move away from today’s unipolar system while pacifying suspicions on China’s



intentions? The author believes that there is no reason to doubt China truly prefers a multipolar world order. For one, the multipolar world view fits within China's realist paradigm of balance of power. Second, the debate among Chinese thinkers is largely over the rate of ascension of multipolarity, actors in the new world order, etc, and not over the desirability of the multipolar world order. The acceptance of this world order is believed to be in China's interest. Third, there appears to be an implicit assumption that even as a multipolar world, China would be one of the top two, if not the most important pole. This may be a desirable outcome, as China could still achieve the preeminence and prestige and the benefits associated with it, without incurring the responsibilities and costs of a hegemon.

Chinese speeches, policies, and strategic thinking occasionally reveal certain assumptions and principles that could affirm or dispel notions of hegemony. The findings in this analysis appear to be mixed. China's leaders have consistently declared that China's focus is to "continue the modernization drive," "reunify the motherland," "safeguard world peace and promote common development" (Jiang 2001). In addition, they also assert that China will not pursue hegemony, and does not seek external expansion. The PRC foreign minister in his review of China's diplomatic achievements over the past fifty-five years this year, appeared to find more satisfaction in highlighting China's improving relations with ASEAN, the US, India, Japan, the EU, and Russia, than focusing on the resoluteness of China's stand against foreign aggression (Li Zhaoxing 2004).

However, in the 1980s to mid 90s, there were nonetheless strategic ideas that hint at certain hegemonic streaks. Around 1986, Ms. Song Yimin, Head for the Studies of

World Politics, Institute of International Studies, Beijing, for the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) published a monograph that could be accepted as reflecting the semi-official party line of the mid-1980s. In the monograph, she argues that China's security is inseparably linked to world peace and "the more China develops, the greater the restraint for war, and the greater the assurance for [world] peace" (Song 1986, 34). Deng Xiaoping also said, "The stronger China grows, the better the chances are for preserving world peace" (Kim 1996, 5). Such assumptions expose a Chinese concept of the "hegemonic peace theory."

Another development is the rise of the concept "shengcun kongjian" (survival space). China's strategists sometimes speak of the need for survival space that extends into the Indian Ocean, South China Sea, East China Sea, and vertically into space (Kim 1996, 12). An internal Chinese document states that the disputed island groups in the South China Sea could provide *lebensraum* or "survival space" for the Chinese People (Carver 1992, 999-1028), reminiscent to the Germany's own expansionist foreign policy in World War II.

In reconciling China's pronouncements against expansion and its concern with the ocean periphery, it is important to note that what other states consider external expansion, China could consider internal reunification. The case in point is Taiwan. For China, Taiwan has always been an internal issue. While committed to a peaceful re-unification, China does not hesitate to employ force should Taiwan take decisive steps to declare independence. The Paracel and Spratly Island groups and Diaoyu-Senkaku Islands are also claimed by China as part of its territory and the foreign occupation of these islands is viewed as impingement on China's territorial integrity. This is the concept of "haiyang

guotu guan” (sea as national territory). The National People’s Congress in 1992 adopted “The Law of the People’s Republic of China on Its Territorial Waters and Their Contiguous Areas,” which stipulates China’s territorial areas as “the mainland and its offshore islands, Taiwan and the various affiliated islands include Diaoyu, Penghu, Dongsha, Xisha (Paracel), Nansha (Spratly) and other islands that belong to the PRC.” The law vests the Chinese navy with the right to eject any foreign incursion on the islands and waters by force (Kim 1996, 16-17). Thus, China’s leaders could use military force with regard to this issue and still justify their anti-hegemonic stance. Yet, while it is possible to understand China’s treatment of Taiwan as an issue of national unification, it is much more difficult to see China’s forays into the East China Sea, South China Sea, and Indian Ocean as anything less than expansionistic, given the dubiousness of some of their claims when judged by the UN Convention of the Law of the Seas (Dillon 2001).

Most recent indications, nevertheless, suggest that China intends to make good on its pledge to eschew hegemony and expansionism. In late 2003 and early 2004, the origin and demise of the idea of China’s “peaceful rise” (heping jueqi) reveals, at the very least, some tensions in China’s conception of its future role. Zheng Bijian, a formidable intellectual figure within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), first introduced the term “peaceful rise” when he said, “China has blazed a new strategic path that not only suits its national conditions but also conforms to the tide of times. This new strategic path is China’s peaceful rise through independently building socialism with Chinese characteristics, while participating in rather than detaching from economic globalization” (2003). In the same speech, Zheng also pledged that China would rise to the status of a great power without destabilizing the international order or oppressing its neighbors.

President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao both used the term in prominent speeches in December 2003, suggesting that the idea was finding its way into Chinese foreign policy. This term was used again several times in the next few months by China's top leaders, while the Chinese intellectual community discussed and pronounced the theory as correct and appropriate (Suettinger 2004, 4). However, Jiang Zemin and some members of the Politburo Standing Committee were rumored to have raised objections (Suettinger 2004, 1) and from April 2004, the leadership did not use the term in public. The academic debate on the peaceful rise then turned to the shortcomings of the concept. Among the objections raised were that the concept of peaceful rise would cause fears and opposition in Asia, that it was demeaning that China accommodates itself to US leadership, and that the use of force should not be constrained in dealing with Taiwan.

The real reason for the rise and demise of the peaceful rise is unclear. Three possible explanations were posited by Robert Suettinger in his article in the China Leadership Monitor. One reason is that China could have rediscovered the need to maintain the threat of force to prevent Taiwan from declaring independence. Shortly after Wen Jiabao's explanation of the peaceful rise, the Taiwanese went to the polls and reelected proindependence President Chen Shuibian. Another reason is that the peaceful rise was intended more as a propaganda campaign to reassure surrounding states and foreigners nervous about China's economic rise. However, this reason appears less likely given the abrupt drop of the term from political statements, suggesting a reversal rather than a well thought out publicity plan. A more troubling reason is that the old guard, led by Jiang Zemin, could have overruled Hu's attempt to develop a new framework for

China's foreign policy or at least advised that the term not be used by party and state leaders while debate continued (Suettinger 2004, 7-8).

Whatever the reason, there are several observations that could be made. First, the need to remove the term from official statements suggests that Chinese leaders were cognizant that the international community was keenly tuned to the policy content of the speeches and they saw a need to honor China's pledges. This means that official foreign policy statements cannot be purely rhetoric without any basis of truth. Second, the prominence given to the peaceful rise by China's top leaders over a period of four months signals that the phrase was not used carelessly. Third, the idea of a peaceful rise must at least have resonated well with a younger generation of leaders, such as Hu and Wen. This augurs well as it suggests that the new generation of Chinese leaders is more willing to adopt policies reflective of a responsible and benevolent power.

In conclusion, the manifest intent test reveals that China's strategic mind-set is distinctly realist, even today. However, there are indications, especially from the late 1990s and early 2000s, that China would not overstep its bounds by aggressively pursuing hegemony. China appears comfortable with a multipolar world order, where peace and economic growth prevail. But what happens when China's power eclipses that of other states perhaps in the 2020 timeframe and beyond by virtue of its relentless economic growth? Would China not behave like a hegemon in that situation? This question is addressed in the next section.

## CHAPTER 5

### TRANSMITTED INTENT

Having examined China's historical strategic preferences and obtained an internal perspective of how China views its security circumstances and envisions its future, the study now reconciles the two images of China that have been painted so far. On one hand, there is a historical China that is undoubtedly a realist in its approach to security, preferring to use force against its enemies when it had the capability. On the other hand, based on the works of China's leaders, Chinese intellectuals, and official government positions, today's China appears generally anti-hegemonic and focused on economic development. The purpose of this section is to determine the extent to which imperial China's strategic preferences are transmitted to the PRC today. If there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the PRC inherited imperial China's characteristics, one can then deduce that China's anti-hegemonic stance is merely rhetoric, reflective of its current power status and not its true strategic intent. Conversely, if significant strategic discontinuities exist, then one has to accept the possibility of a new strategic mind-set.

The next chapter, "Reality Check," crosschecks this analysis with actual events that occurred in the recent past. However, reality checks cannot speak for the future as much as they can for the present. An assessment of future direction is best attained in this section by studying the likelihood that current mind-sets and strategic preferences are transmitted into the future. This chapter has this additional purpose.

To do this, the author examined the motivating factors that may cause the same strategic preferences to endure till today and the mechanisms that allow this to happen.

Specifically, the motivating factors are the persistence of China's national interests across the centuries and the continuity in strategic circumstances that necessitate similar strategies as in the past. If these motivating factors exist, it is possible then that the PRC adopts the same strategic preferences as imperial China even without a transmission of strategic culture. Mechanisms refer to the means that allow internal transfer of mind-sets and strategic culture from each successive generation to the next. Mechanisms that were examined include the historical conditioning process, the common sources of strategy, and the leadership transfer process.

The formal articulation of China's national interest includes "safeguarding state sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and security; upholding economic development as the central task and unremittingly enhancing the overall national strength; adhering to and improving the socialist system; maintaining and promoting social stability and harmony; and striving for an international environment of lasting peace and a favorable climate in China's periphery" (State Council Information Office 2002). This list may appear all encompassing, but it does not provide a sense of what is truly important and non-negotiable. The author proposes the following three key interests of the PRC (in order of importance)--internal stability, state unity and sovereignty, and pursuit of comprehensive national power.

China's obsession with internal stability was most clearly seen in the Tiananmen Square incident. Chief concerns of the Politburo Standing Committee were social unrest and the impact it had on other provinces. Despite President George Bush's urging that "the PRC government should exercise restraint in handling the demonstrations" (Suettinger 2003, 53), the Politburo Standing Committee ultimately authorized the use of

force to clear the demonstrators. China's crackdown of the rapidly growing Falungong in the late 1990s, an organization that promotes a Chinese deep-breathing and meditation system, on charges that it is a dangerous cult, reveals its deep-seated suspicion that fast-growing religious groups would subvert the government. China's cautious pace of economic reform also reflects its fear of instability.

The PRC government's obsession with stability is tied to the overriding objective of regime maintenance. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regularly justifies its legitimacy to lead through numerous Party events, such as Plenums (e.g., the Fourth Plenum of the Sixteenth Party Committee), anniversaries (most significantly, the Eightieth Anniversary of Chinese Communist Party in 2001), Congresses, and others. New policies are justified in ideological terms and cloaked as "China's brand of socialism" to retain the link between the communist party and progress, without conceding that the system the CCP represents is no longer relevant. Swaine and Tellis write that the disruptive policies of the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution in the 1950s and 1960s created chaos and uncertainty in China. In the 1970s, the inefficient centralized planning system impoverished the country and set it back significantly. This led to a loss of confidence of the people (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 104). Even today, corruption and growing income disparities cause resentment in the very people the Communist Party is supposed to represent, while the persistent pressure by foreign powers to improve human rights and democratize fuels dissatisfaction with the political restrictions. "These internal and external pressures have forced Beijing to search for sanctuary in economic prosperity and nationalistic feeling" (Wang 1999, 32). As such,



China's next two key interests of national unity and pursuit of comprehensive national power can be viewed as the logical consequences of regime maintenance.

China's concerns with sovereignty are best reflected in its stance against Taiwan. The publicly stated willingness to use force, even against the US should the US support Taiwan's declaration of independence, is one of the few areas where China would abandon its "peaceful persona" and strategy to "lie low" when confronting foreign states more powerful than itself. Thus far China's approach to Taiwan has been pragmatic. As long as status quo is maintained, this would likely be the case (State Council Information Office 2004). China's resolve in this matter need not be tested.

China's strategy for the pursuit of comprehensive national power since Deng Xiaoping took over the reins in 1978 has been to focus on economic modernization as a top priority. China's military modernization then follows as China could afford to channel resources to military development. However, in embracing economic and technological development, China is somewhat dependent on foreign powers for foreign direct investment, technology transfer, and a liberalized market place (Khalilzad et al. 1999, 5). China does have an interest in preserving cordial relations with the great powers and China's diplomacy (e.g., the peaceful resolution of the Belgrade incident, EP3 incident) leading up to the ascension to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in November 2001 is a case in point.

While China prioritizes the Taiwan issue over the pursuit of comprehensive national power, China has appeared more accommodative with regard to other territorial disputes. Despite Japan's occupation of the Diaoyu Islands, China has not engaged in anything more than rhetoric. With regard to the Spratly Islands, China has also appeared

to be behaving reasonably, having agreed to the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. China, at least for the moment, hopes to avoid major conflicts thereby preserving its comprehensive national power and gaining for itself a position of leadership and respectability in the international arena.

Nevertheless, China's pursuit of comprehensive national power, taken to its logical extreme, may require it to abandon more accommodative policies. China is now the world's second largest energy consumer, becoming a net oil importer in 1993 (Li 2004). Given China's economic growth, China's demand for energy will grow rapidly. China needs to sustain the availability of energy at all times in sufficient quantities and affordable prices, and as such "energy security has moved from being a technical low politics issue to a question of high politics" (Speed, Liao, and Dannreuther 2002). China's interest in Diaoyu Islands and Spratlys are primarily energy related. China's strategic policy making with regard to energy has resulted in energy projects in Central Asia, Sino-Russian energy linkages, Chinese petroleum diplomacy in the Middle East, and Africa. Clearly, China's sphere of influence needs to expand if it were to secure its interests. This could potentially lead to conflicts with other major powers.

China's interests today somewhat coincide with its interests in the past. Internal stability has always been the concern of imperial Chinese dynasties. Revolts and uprisings were viciously crushed, and dealings with foreign powers fed directly to the interests of the ruling class. Chinese emperors also did not hesitate to use force to secure territories against their neighbors when they had the power. When China did not possess the capability, it adopted a more accommodative stance. The imperial strategy for the pursuit of comprehensive national power, though, was not as explicit. Nevertheless,

China exhibited a desire to receive tribute and deference from smaller states in a suzerain-client relationship. At least from the similarity of interests, there is reason to believe that imperial China's strategic intent and realist paradigm would persist into the future.

In addition to interests, there is also a need to consider the discontinuities in the strategic environment that could shape China's grand strategy. First, while China was for the most part geopolitically central in the imperial era, this is no longer the case today. While nomadic groups and surrounding states used to look to China as a cultural model, other advanced nations have equally if not more compelling models of government, development, and culture that the Chinese themselves clamor for. The US, Japan, and Russia are today more important and powerful states than China. Even the major intellectual thinkers in China foresee these states as poles, in a multipolar world order. As the world becomes more global and China's interests reside further afield, China's conceptual periphery would be inevitably pushed out. Threats to China's security are no longer limited to the traditional periphery, but also to potential strategic competitors around the world. If China then uses the same strategy as it did in the past with the new periphery, global hegemony is a logical pursuit for China.

The next two discontinuities turn the argument in a different direction. The second discontinuity is that the international space that China operates in today is vastly different from the pre-World War II era. The emergence of international institutions and the socializing effect of transnational contacts and coalition have led to new accepted norms of propriety. Force and assertion are not necessarily the best way to accomplish China's strategic goals. Third, the dependence of China on economic progress, trade, and

an open world economy has bound China to peaceful co-existence and economic development. There is too much for China to lose if it disrupts the status quo.

Swaine and Tellis have however argued that the discontinuities described would not lead to a cooperative China. Instead, they argue that the China that emerges in the future when it had gained sufficient power is likely to be an assertive one--willing to use force to secure its interests and desiring to reshape the international system in its favor. They argue that economic interdependence does not necessarily mean less conflict as Germany and Britain were more interdependent economically on the eve of World War I than the world is today. Swaine and Tellis also claim that the nature of power has not changed and that no state voluntarily gives up the ability to exercise force because military power is the ultimate guarantee that a state can reshape the status quo against the will of those that currently benefit from the system (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 204-209).

In response to Swaine's first argument, the author believes that it has become clear in the last two decades that mercantilist practices and centrally planned economic systems do not lead to economic success. The demise of the Soviet Union as a result of its isolation and autarchic tendencies of the Soviet Union, combined with its centralized economy, is a stark lesson that the Chinese are familiar with, given that they themselves experimented with the "Great Leap Forward." Instead, economic openness, free trade, relentless pursuit of global talent, embracing the global financial system, and free access to information are critical driving forces that allow a state to build up its economic prowess and from there, fund other state priorities. In other words, the most viable strategy for China to build up CNP is to embrace the international system of free markets and global openness. The economic progress of China and the enhanced ability of

Chinese companies to compete in the global market will lead to a greater preference for this status quo, and there will be little motivation for China to use force and destabilize the system that has brought these benefits. China could still opt to reduce interdependence, but only at a cost of hampering its own economic growth.

As for Swaine's second argument, China is understandably dissatisfied with the pervasive presence and influence of the US in the Pacific and wants to restructure the world order differently, thus gaining for itself much desired prestige. Even so, the rapidly growing Chinese economy, increasing political freedom, and a rising level of international engagement actually would serve China's ends better. For one, it makes a more compelling case for Taiwan to embrace China and for the other countries to gradually substitute the centrality of the US in the region for China.

While it is also true that powerful states, such as the US, can ignore international institutions and world opinion and unilaterally pursue an aggressive course of action, there are high costs associated with such a behavior. Obtaining international legitimacy and working within accepted rules dramatically reduces the resources required to secure a state's interest. The burdens of large troop deployments, high defense budgets, exorbitant rebuilding costs, forced theater access, and strong resistance put up by a unifying alliance or force (e.g., Islamic terrorism) that needs to be borne is significant if any state were to embark on unilateral action. China has realized that using the international system shrewdly can accomplish much while preserving comprehensive national power and even enhancing its international image. China's involvement in the six-party talks to resolve the North Korean Nuclear Crisis, consistent use of its UN Security Council powers to register opposition to interference in a country's domestic affairs, and opposition to

Taiwan's involvement in the World Health Organization are examples of this new diplomatic sophistication.

As such, the outright pursuit of global hegemony and aggressive substitution of the existing hegemon yields few benefits, yet entails great risk and high costs since much of the global system sustained by the United States is in China's interests. A multipolar order where China's power and prestige grows to become comparable to the United States appears both desirable and sustainable (Khalilzad et al. 1999, 11). This of course does not mean that China will actively reduce its own power to maintain a multipolar world order. It does suggest that any hegemonic transition would likely result from the natural growth of China. The China that emerges would be circumscribed in its use of force, amounting to a "peaceful rise."

Turning to mechanisms for a transmission of intent, one also finds trends favoring a "peaceful rise" amidst a persistently realist mind-set. Many experts on China argued that current Chinese leadership is held in a siege mentality--the result of the historical conditioning caused by a century of humiliation and defeat at the hands of Japan and Western powers. This historical experience, they say, has "endowed the Chinese with the nineteenth century conception of absolute state sovereignty and taught the lesson of the importance of power politics in international relations and its corollary--that China could not be respected without power." (Kim 1996, 4) Mao also said in 1956 that "if we are not to be bullied in the present world, we cannot do without the atomic bomb" (Mao 1965, 13). Yong Deng writes that this historical conditioning has caused Chinese realists to see the "transnational and multilateral networks through state-centric prism, focusing only on how China could take advantage of the new external environment to protect and

maximize its national interests.” However, Evan Medeiros and Taylor Fravel observed a shift in the writings of Chinese strategists, where articles run in major Chinese newspapers and journals advocate that China abandon the victim mentality (shouhaizhe xintai). The “great power mentality” (daguo xintai) is recommended instead. Chinese officials also now speak of the need to share global responsibilities (Medeiros and Fravel 2003). Has historical conditioning finally run its course? It is probably still too early to tell.

Another mechanism in which a strategic culture may be transmitted from imperial to modern times is through a relatively constant body of work, from which Chinese thinkers draw their strategy. As stated earlier, Ming Chinese scholars and officials look to the Seven Military Classics for ideas and guidance. Even today, many contemporary thinkers in China draw extensively from Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* as well as other works from the Warring States era (Pillsbury 2000, P-1). Pillsbury writes

China’s military authors have called the future multipolar world “amazingly” similar to the Warring States era and declare that China’s future security environment resembles the Warring States era in several ways. A representative article by Colonel Liu Chungzi of the National Defense University Strategy Department states that Sun Zi’s *The Art of War* was “the product of the multipolar world structure in China 2500 years ago,” that “there are a surprising number of similarities between Sun Zi’s time and the contemporary multipolar trend,” and that “in the 1990s, the world entered a multipolar era very similar to the time of Sun Zi.” . . . Others claim that China should study “treasuries” of strategies from the Warring States. Many books have been published in the last 5 years as a revival of interest in ancient statecraft has been officially blessed by a large commission of China’s generals. The director of research at the General Staff Department of the People’s Liberation Army published six volumes of studies on ancient statecraft in 1996 that contained specific advice on how to comprehend the current and future security environment. (2000, Prologue 1)

Deng Xiaoping’s advice to “yield on small issues with the long term in mind” also seems to originate from the ancient “tao guang yang hui” (bide our time and build up our

capabilities) strategy of dealing with a predatory hegemon (Pillsbury 2000, P-3). This mechanism provides reason to believe that China's leaders today and in the future may indeed follow the same "realist" advice their predecessors did.

China's leadership succession system also provides some form of continuity in strategic thought. Unlike Western democratic systems, all China's leaders since Mao have risen through the communist party. Due to a lack of an institutional power transition mechanism, China's leaders usually emerge through a system of patron-client ties whereby an existing leader handpicks his followers and place them in influential positions (Cheng 2003, 42), where they can gain experience and advance their patron's interests. Informal networks and connections "guanxi," for instance the "Shanghai Gang" or the "Qinghua Clique" that arise because of a common affiliation to a certain organization are also important in building the leader's power base. Hu Jintao, the current president of China, was groomed and placed in leadership positions by Deng Xiaoping before he stepped down. Zeng Qinghong, the Vice-President, was very close to Jiang Zemin, the previous president, and performed the role of moving Jiang's opponents out of the way (Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment 2004). Wen Jiabao, the current premier of China, had Zhu Rongji, the former premier, as his political patron. One can expect the political views of the client to be closely tied to his patron. Informal networks also play their role in transmitting ideas across individuals and securing support for certain policies. Occasionally party schools, such as the Central Party School, try to define the party line and teach rising leaders "how to think about what is right and wrong." (Fewsmith 2003, 154)



However, there are trends in the succession process that are leading to gradual shifts in policy directions. Since Mao, each successive Chinese leader has had a declining standing as a paramount leader. Deng (2nd generation) did not have as much influence as Mao (1st Generation), as Jiang's (3rd generation) standing was less than Deng's, and so the trend continues for Hu (4th generation), who came after Jiang. Seeking consensus among the top leaders is therefore becoming more important. Performance and achievements are also increasing crucial, and there will likely be pressure toward more institutionalized power transitions (Cheng 2003, 42). Since 1995, more than 1,000 officials with ranks of vice head of department or above had been recruited through open exams.

Each successive generation of leaders also appear to take the country on an increasingly capitalist mode of economic development. Shifts in ideological rhetoric are trending in this direction. Since the failure of the Great Leap Forward, Deng Xiaoping's focus on economic modernization and market reforms was the first major policy change. His efforts to cast this strategy as a correct interpretation of Mao's Marxist-Leninist thought introduced new ideological slants such as "seeking truth from facts," "socialism with Chinese characteristics" to accommodate a gradually liberalizing economy. In spite of the Tiananmen Square incident, Jiang Zemin continued much of the economic reforms. Tax incentives continued, special economic zones grew, while incomes of the middle class increased. Jiang's great ideological contribution "The Three Represents" was especially significant as it argued that the CCP must represent "the advanced productive forces, the orientation of China's advanced culture, and fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people," (Jiang 2001) which now included businessmen

and entrepreneurs. The ideological foundation for the coexistence of capitalist forces within the CCP has thus been further strengthened. Hu Jintao had urged even greater effort to implement the “Three Represents” (Xinhua News Agency, 1 July 2003), and in time he will probably make an ideological contribution of his own. The trend toward capitalism is clear. As for political liberalization, the process is slower, but indications are present (see “peaceful rise” issue in Manifested Intent section).

Furthermore, each successive generation of leadership has increasing exposure to the West, through university, courses, visits, and interactions with foreign officials. The fifth generation of leadership that could begin to run China from the early 2010s, is adequately familiar with the West, better educated, and can read English and use computers with ease (Lam 2003, 251). Although few of them were educated abroad, this number would increase with time. An estimated 380,000 have gone abroad since the early 1980s (until 2003), and 130,000 have returned (Lam 2003, 251). As more of these overseas educated Chinese are placed into prominent positions, national perspectives can be expected to change as leaders view the West with less suspicion. Given that many of these returnees are currently in their 30s and Chinese leaders usually ascend to the highest positions in their late 50s or early 60s, Chinese leaders in twenty to thirty years’ time could well be heavily influenced by Western culture and ideals. This roughly coincides to the period when China’s economy could be the most powerful in the world.

Increasingly, there will be a tension between communist party ideology and reform-oriented policies. While this is no guarantee that China would become fully democratic or embrace the liberal paradigm of international politics, China’s leaders would most likely be shaped by a different mold.

What can one say then to the likelihood that imperial Chinese strategic preferences persist indefinitely into the future? China's realist paradigm is likely to remain, at least into the near future, given the historical conditioning and high regard given to ancient texts. However, China's realist paradigm is likely to lead it to conclude, in the light of the discontinuities in strategic environment and the way the world does business, that the use of force to aggressively secure its interests may not be the best course of action. It would likely use international institutions, diplomatic power, and economic incentives to attain its goals. As explained in the previous section, there are already such indications in China's contemporary strategic literature and in the speeches by China's leaders. As China's leadership becomes increasingly socialized internationally, the link between their thinking and that of their predecessors would also increasingly weaken.

## CHAPTER 6

### REALITY CHECK

The analysis of China's strategic intent, both historical and current, must ultimately be grounded in recent events and phenomena. By recent, the author means events post-1978, when Deng Xiaoping took over as paramount leader of China and shifted China's focus to economic modernization. The reality check could also indicate some emerging trends for the future. This section applies the criteria provided in the section on "Defining Hegemonic Tendencies." Chiefly, it answers two main questions: Does China qualify as a rising state with the power to eventually be a hegemonic state, and do China's actions demonstrate a propensity to dominate states across the globe?

Looking first at economic power, one must conclude that China does indeed have the capacity to overtake the United States as the country with the largest GDP, and generate for itself sufficient resources to build international prestige and other instruments of power. China's GDP is already the second highest in the world, behind the United States, at \$6.45 trillion in 2004 (CIA 2004). The momentum of growth is set to propel China past the United States around 2020. China's economy shows sign of a soft landing as a result of government policies to prevent overheating due to excess investment (Xinhua News Agency May 24, 2004). Foreign direct investment (FDI) continues to pour in and a United Nations survey for FDI predict that China will be the most attractive destination for investments from 2004 to 2007 (UNCTAD 2004, 6). China's ascension to the WTO means that its economy will continue to liberalize, absorbing more and more of the world's production. Greater transparency in China's

regulatory system, strengthening of intellectual property rights, and other economic reform will also occur as a result of China's WTO commitments. Chinese companies are expected to rise up the value chain. Already, there are policies in place to attract investment in high tech areas and facilitate technology transfer. If China's incentives to attract new investments in the underdeveloped central and western parts of China prove successful (Political Risk Services 2003), the benefits of economic development would extend beyond the eastern parts of China and the special economic zones. A growing middle class and rapidly expanding markets will undoubtedly draw many countries to it.

China's resource base is substantial, although this does not appear sufficient for China. It is self-sufficient in key food products (Countrywatch 2004, 53) and produces many metals (Countrywatch 2004, 71) even though demand for metals is far outstripping supply. China is the world's second largest importer of oil (Goodman, Washington Post Foreign Service, 21 May 2004), even though it is the eighth largest producer of oil (CIA 2004). China's industrial production growth rate is the world's highest at 30.4 percent in 2004. People wise, China has 1.3 billion. Chinese foreign talent can be found all over the world. As educational levels rise, China's talent pool would become its most valuable resource. China's economic might would in all likelihood provide the resources it needs to strengthen all aspects of its national power.

Militarily, China still lags behind many developed countries, such as the United States and Japan. It has limited power projection capabilities. It does not have any plans to produce an aircraft carrier, and its amphibious capabilities have difficulty even supporting a conventional invasion of Taiwan (Report to Congress 2004). Its conventional capabilities also require massive resources for modernization. Nevertheless,

China does have a capable missile force. It has 500 short-range ballistic missiles that can reach Taiwan, even Okinawa. It also currently has 20 inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBM) that could reach the United States, and this number is set to rise further (Report to Congress 2004). China has a nuclear arsenal that provides credible deterrence of mutually assured destruction when used together with its ICBMs. China's military capability definitely befits that of a rising state.

China's military budget is rising. For 2004, the defense budget is estimated at 50 to 70 billion dollars. Annual spending could increase in real terms three to four-fold by 2020 (Report to Congress 2003). At only 1-2 percent of GDP, China's growing economy can support large increases in the defense budget if needed. China has arms contracts with Russia to purchase advanced weapon systems: Twenty-four Sukhoi-30 fighter, SA-20 air defense missiles, four SOVREMENNY Class destroyers, and four Russian KILO Class attack submarines. China's space and counterspace capabilities are also growing. In addition, China is also developing "assassin's mace" and "trump card" type weapons to counter US military capability in the region. China also seeks to achieve self-sufficiency in its defense industries and attain weapon quality levels of the industrialized nation in the next five to ten years, although its chances for success are uncertain. If China's economy continues to support a rising defense budget, it is conceivable that China could develop one of the most powerful militaries in the world, albeit in a timeframe beyond 2020. At the present moment, it appears that China's military capabilities are more oriented toward the perceived threat posed by the United States than on global hegemony, given the lack of aircraft carriers.

China's diplomatic power is evident in its permanent seat on the UN Security Council and its veto powers. China is also becoming increasingly sophisticated in using diplomatic channels to achieve its goals. Between 1988 and 1994, China normalized or established diplomatic relations with eighteen countries. It built on these relationships in the 1990s, to balance against US influence in the region. The signing of the Treaty of Good Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation with Russia in 2001, the initiation of "ASEAN + 3 (South Korea, Japan and China)" and "ASEAN + 1 (China)" forums, Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Central Asia, were efforts in widening China's diplomatic space, while limiting US influence. China has also been steadily improving ties with Europe and India. In exercising its UN powers, China has become more comfortable in invoking Chapter VII (Peace Enforcement), something it avoided in the past to signal its opposition to foreign interference in what it regarded as a state's internal affairs. President Hu Jintao became the first Chinese leader to attend a G-8 meeting (Medeiros and Fravel 2003). China's participation in arms control regimes such as the Missile Technology Control Regime and the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty has allowed it to increase its standing on the international stage while tying the hands of its adversaries (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 138-140).

In terms of informational power, Chinese food and foreign talent have already emerged as highly exportable aspects of its culture. Historically, China has exhibited a desire to be acknowledged as the "center of the universe" by other states and ethnic groups in its suzerain-client relations. Foreigners had to pay their respects to the emperor in a highly deferential manner. Even by the very name "zhongguo," China calls itself the "middle kingdom." Given China's defeats in the twentieth century, it is more difficult to

find overt hints of cultural superiority. Jiang's second represent, "the orientation of the development of China's advanced culture," to enhance the "Chinese people's national self-esteem, self-confidence, and sense of pride, and stimulate them to make unremitting efforts for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation (Jiang 2001), provides one such indication.

Taking all instruments of power into account, the author concludes that China does qualify as a rising state with the power to become hegemonic. Although it remains to be seen if China's near double digit growth rate could be sustained indefinitely even *after* China has overtaken the United States, there is a distinct possibility that the world could transit from a unipolar system to a multipolar system and eventually to a unipolar system, where China is the hegemon.

China's current propensity to dominate could be examined in six issues--the 1979 War with Vietnam, gunboat diplomacy in the Spratlys, cultivation of Central Asia, Chinese-North Korean relations, energy strategy, and arms policy. These issues were selected as they reflect relations with smaller, less powerful countries. Taiwan, Xinjiang, and Tibet are excluded as they are viewed by China as intra-state issues and therefore it must be expected that China exerts or tries to exert a greater degree of control over these regions. Although the same can be said of the Spratly Islands, the degree of negotiating room that China has conceded in the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, the absence of any strong rhetoric threatening the use of force (as in the case for Taiwan), and the lack of recognition of China's claims leads one to believe that China has not yet viewed the Spratly's as an intra-state issue..



The 1979 war with Vietnam, while demonstrating China's resolve to get its way, was not motivated by an expansionist desire. It came at a time when China had shifted its focus to economic modernization, and deliberations internally considered the prospect that China's modernization efforts would be detracted. For the most part, China's interests appeared to be national security. Vietnam, a Soviet client state, had invaded Cambodia in December 1978 at a time when China-Soviet relations were fraught with tension. Concerns over Vietnamese expansionism were "compounded by Vietnam's treatment of its ethnic Chinese residents, border incidents, and Vietnam's increasingly vocal claims to territory that China considered its own" (Scobell 2003, 120). China decided to invade Vietnam on 17 February 1979 in a limited campaign, with the objective to "teach Vietnam a lesson" (Scobell 2003, 125). On March 5, 1979, after the offensive operations were concluded, Beijing announced that Chinese troops would be withdrawn. This withdrawal was completed eleven days later. Even though "teaching Vietnam a lesson" appears arrogant, the Chinese had justifiable reasons for their anger, given the aid they rendered Hanoi during the Vietnam War. China's use of force thus appears to have been motivated by a need to check Vietnamese and Soviet influence.

China's gunboat diplomacy in the Spratlys, however, reveals a more menacing side. In 1988, China seized seven islands from Vietnam after a brief naval clash. In 1995, China occupied Mischief Reef, which is claimed by the Philippines, and erected several concrete structures (Chambers 2002, 78). Given the potential for oil reserves and China's burgeoning energy needs, China's aggression to secure the natural resources it needs is a clear act of domination. Nevertheless, China signed a declaration on the code of conduct of parties in the South China Sea in 2002 and is committed to a peaceful settlement.

In Central Asia, China appears to be pursuing its interests in peaceful ways. Stability, trade, and energy are key Chinese interests in this region (Burles 1999, 5). In addition, Central Asia may emerge as an area of transit between China and Europe (Burles 1999, 30). China has settled border conflicts with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, sometimes on less than advantageous terms (Medeiros 2003). In Tajikistan, China accepted only 1000 square kilometers of the contested 28,000 square kilometers. Given the ascendancy of China as compared to Russia, several central Asian countries are re-orienting to China. China is now an important trading partner of both Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan (CIA 2004). China has thus far not exerted influence that limits these countries' freedom of action. While it is possible that trade and foreign investment dependence on China increases, Russia remains an important alternative economically.

On the surface, China appears to have substantial influence over North Korea. China is North Korea's only ally, ratified by the 1961 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance. China supplies North Korea with arms, economic aid, and even security guarantees. China also acts as North Korea's diplomatic conduit to the outside world. China sees the Korean Peninsula as vital to its security. The relationship is often described to be as close as "lips and teeth." China is an active participant in the foreign policy of North Korea to the extent of "mutual cooperation in safeguarding the peace in the region (Article 1), mutual effort in confronting security challenges (Article 2), and mutual agreement on the way the Koreas should be unified (Article 6)." (Choo, Asia-Times Online, 17 Dec 2003). China's ability to broker the six-party talks is recent evidence of China's influence over North Korea.

However, upon closer examination, there is evidence that China's influence in North Korea may be exaggerated. If China had the ability to sway North Korea, it would have convinced North Korea to abandon its nuclear ambitions, since the rearmament of Japan as a result of the North Korean threat is clearly against China's interests. Between 1999 and 2003, Beijing's economic assistance to Pyongyang and the latter's dependence on China for food, fuel, and monetary remittances declined in both absolute and relative terms (Mansourov 2003, 9-1). China's military-technical assistance is not of significant value. Kim Jong Il's regime also supports the popular belief that Chinese merchants took advantage of North Korean economic difficulties by plundering North Korea's natural resources in exchange for goods of dubious value. Kim appears to be playing China and the US against each other to secure his country's interests. In categorically stating that North Korea has a sovereign right to possess a nuclear deterrent force, Kim bets that China does not want to see North Korea turn into an area of conflict with a potential for confrontation against US and its allies. This leaves China only with the option of pushing for negotiations and settlement without war, a move that is likely to bring further concessions to North Korea (Mansourov 2003, 9-8). China's dominance of North Korea is thus far from certain, and China has refrained from tightening its grip. This is expected to remain the state of affairs until China perceives that North Korea is dragging it onto a collision course with the US.

Further afield, China's foreign policy has revolved around energy and arms sales. China's abstention vote in the UN to impose sanctions on Sudan in the light of human rights abuses is said to be closely related to China's oil interests (Zhongguo Qingnian Bao, 10 Aug 2004). China's energy market has also been used as a carrot to influence

other countries to adopt policies favorable to China's interests. The crackdown on Uighur organizations located in Central Asian states that support Xinjiang secessionist movements can be attributed to the incentive of energy contracts (Speed, et al, 2002, 83). Even Australian businessmen have exerted pressure on their government to "distance Australia from the US over Taiwan to improve the chances of winning potential \$10 billion natural gas contracts in China" (Lague and Saywell, Far Eastern Economic Review, 17 May 2001). According to an unpublished report sponsored by the Office of Net Assessment, China, cognizant that most of its imported oil passes through waters secured by the US, is "building strategic relationships along the sea lanes from the Middle East to the South China Sea in ways that suggest defensive and offensive positioning to protect China's energy interests, but also to serve broad security objectives." At the Pakistani port of Gwada, eavesdropping posts have already been set up and a new naval base is under construction. Billions of dollars in military aid is rendered to Burma, while a naval base is also being built, as eighty percent of China's imported oil passes through the Straits of Malacca. China is strengthening its ties with Bangladesh and building a container port facility at Chittagong. More extensive naval and commercial access is also sought in Bangladesh (Washington Times, 18 January 2005). In the Middle East, China has taken a more active role in the peace process. China has also sold arms to Saudi Arabia and, more dangerously, to Iran in exchange for security of energy supplies (Speed et al. 2002, 90).

Independent of energy related interests, China has also sold weapons and provided technical assistance in nuclear, biological, and chemical capabilities, as well as ballistic missile technology to states such as Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, and Myanmar

throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Byman and Cliff 1999, 7). For these states, China is the sole source of such technology. Although these actions do not, strictly speaking, constitute hegemonic influence, China has shown itself to be willing to secure its interests, fill security vacuums, counter-balance great powers and to reach beyond its periphery in order to do so.

What then can one say about the reality of China's international record? The lack of a Chinese propensity to dominate states in the recent past generally appears in line with China's rhetoric. China has for the most part made good on its pledge not to seek expansionism in the sense of dominating other territories. With regard to arms sales and energy, China does appear to be spreading its influence, but even so, such influence cannot be considered excessive. Swaine and Tellis explain that China's current security behavior is guided by the "calculative strategy" in order to sustain undistracted growth in its economy, to ensure domestic order and protect its security interests along the periphery and beyond.

First, overall, a highly pragmatic, non-ideological policy approach keyed to market-led economic growth and the maintenance of amicable international political relations with all states, and especially with the major powers. Second, a general restraint in the use of force, whether toward the periphery or against other more distant powers, combined with efforts to modernize and streamline the Chinese military, albeit at a relatively modest pace. Third, an expanded involvement in regional and global interstate politics and various international, multilateral fora, with an emphasis, through such interactions, on attaining asymmetric gains whenever possible. (Swaine and Tellis 2000, 113-114)

Kim posits that China's participation in international institutions follows "a maxi/minor axiom – the maximization of security benefits via free-riding and/or defection strategies and the minimization of normative (image) costs (Kim 1996, 27). In the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, China insists that the United States and Russia must bear the primary

responsibility for reducing their arsenal. In the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty negotiation, China has tried to delay the completion of the CTBT, to avoid constraining its own nuclear testing program (Kim 1996, 28).

Whatever the reasons for China's generally unhegemonic orientation, actions have shown that realist considerations are still in the forefront of China's strategic calculations. However, at least in deed, there is scope to reconcile China's hard realist thinking with meaningful participation in international institutions and elicit cooperative behavior.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Final Analysis

In summary, the analysis from previous chapters has led to the following conclusions.

1. The historical record shows that China had adopted a realist approach to international relations, preferring to use force against its enemies when China had the capability. There also existed a desire for geopolitical, economic, and cultural pre-eminence. Taken together, imperial China had exhibited hegemonic tendencies.

2. Contemporary strategic thinking, as evidenced from the writings of Chinese scholars and their leaders, demonstrates that a realist paradigm still exists today. Balancing powers and a multipolar world order based on the “Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence” is China’s preference. On balance, indications from contemporary strategic thinking lean toward the conclusion that hegemony is not China’s strategic intent.

3. Since 1979 and more so since the late 1990s, China has shown an increasing sophistication in the use of diplomatic and economic instruments of power in pursuit of state interests and has shown a preference to use these instruments over force. The main indications of China’s propensity to dominate lie in the pursuit of energy and arms transfer policies. Even so, it is a stretch to argue that these policies constitute a systematic strategy to achieve hegemony.

4. The reasons for the disconnect between imperial China’s grand strategy and the seemingly more docile nature currently being displayed can be explained by China’s calculative (Swaine and Tellis’ terminology) and mini-maxi (Kim’s terminology)

strategy. These explanations reconcile the conflict avoidance strategy with China's realist paradigm. However, the changes in the strategic environment that favor the pursuit of economic growth as a strategy to accumulate comprehensive national power could also have contributed to a shift in orientation from the assertive hegemonic tendencies it had in past.

5. In the future, discontinuities in the strategic environment and leadership transition processes will prevent a realist paradigm coupled with the accumulation of power from translating directly to an assertive hegemonic strategy. China would be increasingly wedded to a free and peaceful economic environment as interests dictate so. China will most likely continue liberal economic policies, engagement with the international system, increased international responsibility sharing and perhaps even political reform.

6. Since hegemonic tendency has been defined as "the propensity and tendency for a state to assert itself in a way as to dominate other states in the global system," China will, in the strictest sense, probably not actively seek hegemony. Even if a hegemonic transition does occur by virtue of China's relentless economic growth, the process is likely to be peaceful. China may become more assertive in pursuing its interests as any state with increased power and interests would, but the use of force would not amount to expansionism. China's conduct would generally be cooperative.

#### Policy Implications

Given China's realist strategic outlook, moderate leaders, relentless pursuit of economic growth, increasing stake in the international status quo, and in all likelihood low propensity to seek hegemony, what are the policy implications for the United States



and Asia? To be sure, the author has expressed a judgment that this is a trajectory that China might take, but the possibility that China's realist mind-set translates into an aggressive hegemonic strategy cannot be ruled out. As such, proposed policies must continue to lock China into the global system of openness and accepted norms of peaceful cooperation, while reserving the ability to deter or respond effectively to a belligerent China. A strategy of containment per se only heightens China's fears, encourages China to break away from a status quo that penalizes it, and reaffirms the value of force in resolving strategic dilemmas. This strategy thus has the tendency of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy as China pursues more aggressive means to break out of containment. That said, any prudent strategy of engagement must still take into account China's realist calculations and provide options for the use of force to guard against a worst-case scenario.

For the United States, whom China fears and respects at the same time, increasing diplomatic, economic, cultural and military ties should be the overall tenor of the relationship. China must be continually engaged in the international regimes, especially those for arms control, as well as in the resolution of conflicts, such as in North Korea's nuclear standoff. The objectives are twofold: to give China a stake in shaping a strategic environment that is conducive to achieving international interests as well as serving China's own interests, and to encourage China to undertake the responsibilities befitting that of an emerging power. China's freeloading behavior must be discouraged. If necessary, China must be nudged to make good on its international commitments, such as WTO, arms nonproliferation agreements, and security agreements with ASEAN and other neighboring states.

The US also needs to adopt an enlightened approach in responding to China's actions that are contrary to American values or interests. The objective is to minimize Chinese nationalism, even as the US seeks to shape China's behavior. As expressed by Thomas Christensen, the best way to foster hypernationalism is to "put undue pressure on moderate Chinese leaders with reasonable international agendas" or "accommodate and reward belligerent and uncooperative policy initiatives with passivity or even concessions" (Christensen 2002, 253). Avoiding these two pitfalls is a tricky balance that requires a clear understanding of Chinese perceptions and their domestic situation as well as much finesse.

In particular, the issues of arms proliferation, human rights, and Taiwan require a more pragmatic approach. The United States should stand ready to reprove or castigate China's pursuit of destabilizing policies, in clear violation of agreed upon commitments. For example, a greater effort to impose sanctions on Chinese companies bent on proliferating WMD and ballistic missile technologies should be made. However, with regard to human rights, the ideological leanings of the US inevitably clash with the Chinese paranoia of instability and subversion. In this area, the author recommends that the US should shift its pre-occupation with democratic reforms to good governance. Good governance is likely to resonate better with the Chinese government, people, and international community, whereas democracy is viewed as an apparatus to extend US influence. Where necessary, the US could voice its disapproval, and calibrate diplomacy accordingly without the outright threat of a punitive response.

The United States should remain noncommittal on the issue of Taiwan. US-China relations have become much more than just Taiwan, and as such US interests are poorly

served if held hostage by the uncertainties of cross-strait relations. The US should emphasize a peaceful resolution to the process, without having to commit or actively promote the reunification of Taiwan with the PRC. For now, status quo is in US interest. Status quo puts the onus on the PRC to pursue reunification peacefully and on terms acceptable to the Taiwanese. As cross-strait economic links strengthen, as the benefits of being associated with PRC increase with its standing in the international arena, as PRC's political system become more democratic, transparent, and open, and as more autonomy is given to special administrative regions such as Hong Kong, the possibility that China realizes reunification is greater. US objectives are thus achieved in the process. A status quo policy also means that the US exerts a restraining influence on the pro-independence movement of Taiwan, while discouraging saber-rattling on China's part.

At the same time, the United States should seek to engage Asia more actively. The strategy should not be to compete directly with Chinese influence in the region, but to build on the role of the US as "Asia's leading power and the region's economic and security power of choice." (Sutter 2004) In retaining a substantial presence in Asia, the United States exerts a pacific influence on Japan, China, and the Koreas. Should North Korea be allowed to turn nuclear, Japan would inevitably follow suit. China, who is extremely concerned with Japan's rearmament, would then drastically accelerate military modernization, and the region would spiral into an arms race and strategic competition. As long as the US remains engaged and continues to underwrite Japan's security, Japan's proclivity to "turn nuclear" can be assuaged.

China has also shown to be eager to fill in the vacuum the US leaves. Following the strains in US and Indonesian ties as a result of human rights abuses in East Timor and

the US Global War on Terror, China has cultivated and strengthened ties with Indonesia (*People's Daily Online* [China], 13 Apr 2000 and 14 Mar, 2002). China has also developed close ties with the military regime of Myanmar, a human rights pariah, and supplied it with billions of dollars in military assistance (*Washington Times*, 18 Jan 2005). US engagement of the countries in Asia would prevent countries from seeking the embrace of Chinese aid as the only recourse. However, the objective is not to contain China but to offer an attractive alternative to being excessively dependent on China. US activism and sensitivity to the concerns of Asian states undergoing transition would go far in improving the perceptions of these states on the intentions of the US (Sutter 2004).

What then should Asian states do? Asian states have less power than the United States and less foreign policy options. Large powers in the Asia-Pacific, namely Japan and Australia, have made their choice to align themselves with the US. India too remains friendlier to the US than with China. However, there is much to be gained from Chinese markets, and thus these states would do well to strengthen economic ties with China, while persuading the US to maintain a presence in the region. Of the three large powers, the relationship is especially thorny for Japan and China. In the near to medium term, it is acknowledged that relations between these two countries will be fraught with suspicion. However, as long as the United States remains actively engaged in the Pacific, Japan might do well to follow the cue of the United States in calibrating the orientation of foreign policy and the pace of arms build-up.

For smaller states in Southeast Asia and in the Pacific, the issue is more complex. Small states have long been reluctant to choose between the US and China. Furthermore, the economic opportunities in China are too attractive to pass up. Small states should

therefore strive for closer ties with China, increasing economic interdependence.

Strengthening diplomatic and military ties should also be pursued. China should be given a stake in the peace and stability of the region.

Practically, these states should engage China in multilateral forums, such as the ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum) or ASEAN + 1. The engagement of China through ASEAN has been helpful in many ways. First, China is locked into a multi-lateral arrangement, whose legitimacy and significance constrains China to operate within internationally accepted norms. Second, China needs to face a united ASEAN front, whose collective strength undoubtedly exceeds that of any individual country. This strategy has been useful when China's naval activities encroached on the Mischief Reef, a disputed region also claimed by the Philippines in 1995. ASEAN's unified stand against China yielded some results. At the ASEAN Regional Forum in Brunei later that year, Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen gave the clear impression that Beijing was willing to discuss the issue multilaterally with ASEAN and to accept the Law of the Sea Convention as a basis for negotiations (da Cunha 1998, 123). Subsequently, China signed the "Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea" in 2002. Third, these forums, especially ASEAN + China, provide China an opportunity to shape the Asian strategic environment in ways that benefit all parties involved.

In the unlikely scenario that China becomes more assertive and belligerent, smaller states in Asia need to revert to realist balance of power strategies to deter China. One possible solution is an ASEAN multilateral framework, as proposed by Derek da Cunha, to create a multilateral defense alliance. However, in the light of the divergent interests of members of ASEAN, this option is but a remote possibility. Only a few states

(Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei) are claimants to the Spratly Islands.

Myanmar and Cambodia also have very close ties with China. More realistically, the engagement of the United States in the region is a better strategy. However, this is something that has to be cultivated now and not just in times of trouble.

In closing, the importance of assessing China's hegemonic ambitions accurately deserves reiteration. First, China's declaration that it would not seek hegemony is confounded by seemingly aggressive actions, be they incursions into the Spratlys, wars of words with Japan and the US, or covert arms proliferation. It is thus important to be able to discern China's true intentions from rhetoric. Second, understanding that China's intentions are unlikely to be hegemonic but more to protect vital interests and sovereignty, the starting point of any China strategy should be to draw China into the international status quo and strengthen its stake in the benefits accruing from the global system. Third, the realization that China's security paradigm is and would, at least in the medium term, continue to be a realist one, logically suggests the preservation of an option to dissuade and deter using the harder instruments of power as a last resort. Conversely, understanding China's security calculations also allows the US to exert restraining influences on its allies to defuse tension in the region. Prudent policies would yield substantial benefits for all.

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